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STRATHERN;

OR

LIFE AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A STORY OF THE PRESENT DAY.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

How like a Comedy is life!
With shifting scenes and changes rife,
Some sad, some gay; but to the wise,
A moral lesson each supplies.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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STRATHERN.

CHAPTER XXXII.

If wealth can many blessings grant
Unknown to those who pine in want,
It also can some ills bestow
That poverty can never know:
The sated appetite, the spleen,
The tedious hours that intervene
'Twixt pleasures that amuse no more
When once their novelty is o'er,
The parasites, *soi-disant* friends,
Intent to gain their private ends—
From these exempt, O Poverty!
Whate'er thine ills, thou still art free.

It is long since we parted with Lord Fitzwarren and his travelling companion, Webworth, who pursued their route, perfectly regardless of the objects on it that attract other tourists, the first, thinking only of the defective breed of horses he noticed at the post-

houses as compared with those of England; and the second commenting on the luncheons and dinners furnished to him at the different inns. Modern travellers find a pleasure in tracing the journey of Horace to Brundusium, and smack their lips when thinking of the Falernian wine he partook of on his way; but our travellers would not have been satisfied with such simple fare as that noted by the Roman poet, and the diary kept by Webworth would have proved the progress made in the *science de bouche* in the nineteenth century, so elaborate were the "pencillings by the way" jotted down by that epicurean of the best *plats* to be had at the different *albergas*. Arrived at Venice, the surprise of Lord Fitzwarren could only be equalled by his anger, when he discovered that there were no horses there, and that gondolas served in the place of carriages. "What a vile city!" said he. "I am glad it is going to ruin, for who but fools could have built one where horses could not be?"

Strange to say, he had never read any account of this sea-born capital, and was, consequently, in perfect ignorance of its peculiarities. "Our stay here shall be brief," resumed he, "for I shan't be caught spending many hours in a place where no horses are to be seen."

A *laquais de place*, who understood a little English, happening to overhear this remark, as Lord Fitz-

warren stood at the door of the Leone Bianco, came forward, and assured my lord that, if he would condescend to put himself under his guidance, he would lead him to see the finest horses in the world.

"Lead on, then, my hearty, and the sooner the better, for I long for the sight of one of my favourite animals, as a fish does for water."

But when they arrived at the Piazza de San Marco, and the celebrated bronze horses there were pointed out to him, he laughed the *laquais de place* to scorn, and declared it was an imposition to stick up horses as a sign, when no living ones could be had in the place. Nay, more, he pronounced the long-admired work of Lysippus to be a poor thing, asserting that the animals showed no blood, and were clumsy brutes. In vain did the voluble Venetian relate the fame and travels of these steeds, always the meed of victors from the remote epoch, when Augustus, after the defeat of Antony, removed them from Alexandria to Rome, down to their *enlèvement* by the modern Cæsar, the Emperor Napoleon, who considered them among his proudest trophies.

"And more fool he!" replied Lord Fitzwarren. "He might have had a score of the finest living, thorough-bred English horses, for half the money which the removal of yonder bronze ones must have

cost; and had he been a good judge of horse-flesh, he would not have looked twice at these."

The *laquais de place* shrugged his shoulders, and offered to conduct milor to some of the palaces to see the pictures.

"You may spare yourself the trouble; I have had quite enough of looking at pictures at Rome, and don't mean to bore myself with any more."

"But Titiano, the great Titiano! surely milor would not leave Venice without beholding the *chef d'œuvres* of his pencil?"

"I will though, for hang me if I look at a picture until I get back to England, and see Edwin Landseer's horses and dogs, that are better worth attention than all your Italian pictures put together."

Returned to the Leone Bianco, Lord Fitzwarren found his friend Webworth selecting from a printed bill of fare before him the dainties he preferred, and noting them down for the cook. "This is such an abominable place, Weby, that it is impossible to stay here," said he.

[We will spare our readers the half intelligible pronunciation of Mr. Webworth, and indite his words without the tiresome lisp that invariably accompanied them.]

"You don't mean that, my good fellow. Why, you remember Burford told us, that the best *chef de cuisine*

in all Italy is to be found at this very hotel, and what the deuce else can you want to make us comfortable?"

"Many things, horses among the rest. How the devil can a man be happy in a place where there is not a horse? No, I really can't make up my mind to stay here a week as we intended—nay, for the matter of that, I should like to go off to-morrow."

"But remember, my dear Fitz, people would laugh so confoundedly at us, were we to leave Venice without seeing its churches, palaces, and fine pictures."

"You don't mean to say that *you* would give a fig, Weby, to see them?"

"I certainly would not have come out of my way to view them, I confess, Fitz, but as we *are* here, I should like to be able to say I had seen them."

"Oh! for the matter of that, Weby, you can *say* you have, and that will do just as well. For my part, I think it will look very knowing when people are talking of Venice, and boring one, as they always do, about pictures and other things, to say *I* was at Venice, but made it a point not to see any of those things, I was so tired of hearing them talked of. That will make 'em stare twice as much as if one prated about the matter for an hour."

"But really, Fitz, I should like to stretch my legs a little after being so long shut up in a postchaise. And though I don't care much about palaces, churches,

and pictures, the going to see them makes one take exercise, and that gives a good appetite, which, as the *chef de cuisine* here is a prime artist, is worth having."

"You would not surely like to go about in one of those black hearses that they call gondolas, Weby? I thought I should be suffocated while I was going to the Place St. Mark, and it put such melancholy thoughts into my head that I haven't got over it yet."

"You won't mind it after a little use, Fitz; so, there's a good fellow, let us stay here a few days, and try the cook's skill. Venice is famed for a certain breakfast-cake called *focaccio*. I wrote it down in my pocket-book when I heard Burford speak of it, and it would be a pity not to make acquaintance with it."

"Well, as you have set your heart on it, Weby, I will stay three or four days here; but it's against my will, I can tell you."

Mr. Webworth endeavoured to induce Lord Fitzwarren to break through his original resolution, and accompany him the regular round of sight-seeing; for the excellence of the cook at the Leone Bianco made so favourable an impression on his mind that he would willingly have prolonged his sojourn there *ad infinitum*, could he have persuaded his friend to remain.

"What you can see in Venice to make you wish to stay here, I cannot imagine," said Lord Fitzwarren,

his temper somewhat tried by the pertinacity with which Webworth continued to urge him to postpone his departure.

"Why, where can we hope to find such a cook, Fitz? And after our bad fare on the road, and indifferent dinners at Rome, it is a comfort to enjoy the living here."

"That fellow Weby thinks of nothing, lives for nothing, but his stomach," thought Lord Fitzwarren, annoyed at the total disregard to his own wishes betrayed by his epicurean companion; while Webworth, when left alone, could not forbear thinking "What a devilish selfish dog Fitzwarren was, who, because *he* did not like Venice, must needs hurry him away from it long before he wished to go."

"Mem," thought Webworth; "if ever I, by any unexpected and lucky chance, should inherit a fortune, I will take especial care never to charge myself with a *compagnon de voyage*. It is the greatest mistake in the world; for one is sure to find it a regular bore. Poor Fitz, though a good sort of fellow in his way, is a terrible *bête*, I must admit. Witness his desire to leave such a cook as we have here. No; *I'll* never invite a friend to travel with me: I have had too much experience of the folly of that. Now, there's Fitz, who always begins to talk when I wish to doze, and interrupts my digestion: then, too, he sometimes touches

me in the carriage; and I hate being touched: wants to have the glass up when I wish it down, and *vice versa*. No; I'll keep my postchaise to myself, if ever I should become master of one, and carefully eschew bores; poor Fitzwarren has given me a sickener of them."

Though previously determined not to go and see any of the sights at Venice, Lord Fitzwarren found the time hang so heavily on his hands, that, in order to get rid of it, he at last consented to accompany his friend the usual round of palaces and churches, protesting, all the time, and with perfect truth, that he felt not the least pleasure in doing so. The past history of Venice was as a blank to him: its fading splendour a matter of indifference. Its proud names could awaken no associations in *his* unlettered mind; and the treasures of art it contains he was incapable of appreciating. His companion, nearly equally ignorant, was quite as indifferent about art; but, calculating that even the superficial knowledge of pictures and places to be acquired by viewing them once or twice might furnish him with new topics of conversation, and so induce invitations to country houses in England, on his return, he determined on not neglecting this opportunity of increasing his claims to the hospitality of those numerous hosts in his own country who find it difficult, from the proverbial dulness of their houses, to secure

guests to eat their good dinners, drink their old wines, and listen to their thrice-told long stories. To such hosts Webworth was a sure card—"A well-bred, inoffensive man," as they termed him—who would neither tempt their wives into flirtations, nor their daughters into an imprudent love-match. He was also very popular with the ladies of these country-houses; for, too silent to be addicted to gossiping, they might, with perfect impunity, indulge in sentimental conversations with any favoured beau, in his presence, without his appearing conscious of it, while he afforded a cover from the open indecorum of a *tête-à-tête*. "It was only Webworth," was a frequent remark uttered by them, when some new adorer, unacquainted with his peculiar merits, stopped short in the midst of a whispered declaration of *tendresse*, on his entering a room; and the younger ladies of families were all amiability to him, because he never prated of who rode by their sides, when out of sight of papa and mamma, or seemed to notice the giving or taking a flower. In fact, Webworth was never *de trop*, for he could fall into a doze whenever he wished it, keep awake during the longest game of chess, or patience, with his hosts, praise their venison, and espouse their political prejudices. No wonder, then, that he was popular.

The *laquais de place* who conducted Lord Fitzwarren and his friend around Venice was at his wits' end, as

he declared to the gondoliers, to know what sight could please milord.

"Ah! these Inglesé (would he say) have too much money to be happy. They take pleasure in nothing, Giacomo. Would you believe it? — this milor will hardly look at our finest pictures, and turns away from our most noble palaces and churches. When I took them to the Frari, to show them the splendid tomb of the Doge Foscari, milor said *he* cared not for all our doges put together; and, when I pointed out the stone that covers the resting-place of our greatest painter, and read aloud—

"'Qui giace il gran Tiziano,'

which I never pronounce without feeling proud, he told me not to speak any of my Italian lingo to him, for he didn't understand a word of it."

"All the Inglesé do not resemble this milor," observed the gondolier. "I have had many of them in this very gondola who knew all about Venice as well — ay, and better too — than any *cicerone* in the place, and who would go from palace to palace, and church to church, to see particular spots where remarkable events had occurred."

"The *laquais de place* tells me that we have now seen everything worth looking at in Venice," said Lord Fitzwarren to his companion, as they sat at a

late breakfast in the bay-window in the Leone Bianco that overhangs the canal, "and a pretty jumble they have made in my head; I can't remember one single thing distinctly, but all is a confused mass mixed up together in my brain; and no wonder, when I have been looking at things I never before heard or dreamt of, and don't care a farthing about. I have been quite out of my latitude ever since I set foot in Italy — that's the truth of it — and I heartily wish I had never left old England, the only country in the world for man or beast. When a fellow don't know what to do with himself, Weby, he's sure to get into a scrape by either marrying or having a duel on his hands, and I hardly know which is the worst. But what I was going to say is, that, now we have got over the sight-seeing, I'm determined to start to-morrow."

Webworth helped himself to another *focaccio*, on the strength of his friend's information, almost groaning, while he cut it, at the recollection that he should so soon be deprived of this dainty.

"I am afraid, my dear Fitz, it will be 'go further and fare worse' with us, for we can nowhere be so well off as here."

"Every man to his fancy," said Lord Fitzwarren. "One man's meat is another's poison. *You* like Venice; *I* hate it, and wouldn't have stayed here a second day for any consideration if you had not

urged it. But to-morrow I go; so hold yourself in readiness, old fellow."

"I wonder whether these *focaccios* would keep two or three days, Fitz, for, if they will, it would be a good plan to take on a supply with us?"

"I dare say my courrier can tell you, so I will ring for him."

The courrier pronounced that the cakes, to be good, must be fresh every day, at which Webworth evinced considerable disappointment, and helped himself to the only remaining one on the dish. "I shall always remember Venice," observed he, "for nowhere have I ever tasted so delicious a cake as this same *focaccio*. I wish one could get it made in England, for the introduction of that and wild boar would be a wonderful acquisition to our epicures."

"For my part, I am so well satisfied with English dishes and cakes, that I require to see no other imported, and only wish I was back to enjoy them," replied Fitzwarren.

And now accompts were to be called in, money to be drawn for at the banker's, and Venetian chains, *conterie*,[1] and other *bijouterie* and toys manufactured at Venice, were to be purchased for the ladies of the Wellerby family. Box after box, filled with these

[1] Pearl beads of various colours curiously enamelled.

glittering articles, were brought to the Leone Bianco for Lord Fitzwarren's selection, and, as his companion eyed them, he sighed, and observed—

"Fitz, you really are a lucky fellow thus to have the power of proving to your absent friends that you have not forgotten them. Were I rich, like you, I should not neglect the opportunity of buying a few gifts for some of my friends at home."

"Select what you like, my dear Weby," replied the good-natured Fitzwarren, unconscious of the indelicacy of this palpable hint on the part of his companion, "and allow me to include them in my bill."

"Thanks, Fitz, you really are the prince of good fellows," and, with the greatest nonchalance, Mr. Webworth looked over the contents of the boxes, chose some gold chains and *conterie* to the value of at least thirty pounds, never demanding the prices, but ordering them to be carefully packed in separate cases.

"A good hit," thought Webworth. "Here I have secured, without expending a shilling, enough gifts to propitiate all the women whose country-houses I wish to frequent. I know how even the richest of them like to receive presents, and how unscrupulously they accept gifts from those who can but ill afford to make them. How I shall be welcomed now that I have something to offer! Yes, that *was* a good hit of mine; and what does it signify whether Fitzwarren, with his

large fortune, pays thirty or forty pounds more than he intended. Poor fellow! once he gets married, there will be an end to his generosity to a friend. I have seen enough of the changes effected, even in the most liberal men, by matrimony, not to be convinced that after it nothing more is to be expected from them by old companions. What a pity it is that such a good-hearted fellow as Fitz should be spoiled by a wife; but it can't be helped, so I must make hay while the sun shines. He doesn't really care a fig for the girl, and could be easily talked out of marrying her; but *I* should be blamed for breaking off the marriage, for, as poor Fitz is known to be such a weak fellow, people would say *I* advised him, and such a report would be injurious to me in families where there are daughters, so I must let things take their course. One of the bores of having one's friends fools is, that whenever they do anything less stupid than usual, the good-natured world attributes it to the person they most live with, who gets all the blame, but never derives any credit for their good-natured acts. Yes, I foresee this will be the last journey I shall take with poor Fitz, unless Lady Olivia shows her temper too much after marriage, and that he bolts, an event very likely to occur, for she has a devilish bad one, I know, and Fitz hasn't been accustomed to be crossed or tormented. Well, happen what may, I will so play my

cards that nobody shall be able to blame *me*; and, for the rest, whether they be happy or miserable, it will be their affair, and not mine."

Thus reasoned the selfish Webworth, wholly indifferent about the future fate of his kindest and most generous friend, whom he only looked on as a person through whose means he might enjoy the luxuries which his own limited fortune denied him.

When Lord Fitzwarren saw the various fresh packages piled up in the anteroom of the Leone Bianco, the morning of his departure from Venice, he asked his servant what they contained.

"They are the provisions ordered by Mr. Webworth, my lord, for the journey."

"Why, there is enough to last for a tour through all Italy."

"Yes, my lord, I believe so; but Mr. Webworth would have all the *plats* which he thought the cook here most excelled in dressing, and, as your lordship sees, they take up a quantity of room."

"Why, Weby, my boy," said Lord Fitzwarren to his friend, who now made his appearance, "you have laid in a great stock of provisions, I see, but how the deuce they are to be stowed away is more than I can tell."

"You must only have a roomy postchaise to convey them, Fitz," replied Webworth, with perfect coolness, "and this can easily be had at Mestrè or Padua."

"Order breakfast," said Lord Fitzwarren.

"Not just yet, my good fellow. Only wait another hour, and we can have some *focaccios* hot from the oven, and what does it matter to you whether we go an hour sooner or later?"

Goodnatured as Lord Fitzwarren was, this new proof of the selfishness of his companion somewhat discomposed him, and he bit his nether lip as he turned away; but, quickly recovering his temper, he said, "Well, Weby, have it all your own way; you must not be disappointed about your favourite cakes."

Not only had Webworth ordered the large supply of comestibles piled up in the anteroom, but he had also procured many receipts for different *plats*, in the dressing of which the *chef de cuisine* of the Leone Bianco had evinced a more than ordinary degree of culinary skill, taking especial care that, as they were had under pretence of handing them over to Fitzwarren's future cook, the courrier of his lordship should charge the *douceur* given to the *chef* for inditing them to that nobleman.

"With these receipts I shall secure a sojourn at many country-houses when I get back to England," thought Webworth, "where a new dish of any merit, like a new visitor of any talent, is sure to be well received, as they break the monotony of dull parties."

Long journeys, shut up *téte-à-téte* in a travelling-carriage, are a severe test of friendship. Such oppor-

tunities are afforded of discovering the weaknesses and defects of fellow-travellers, that persons must be, indeed, both amiable and agreeable to continue as good friends after as before a long journey. The digestive organs of Webworth, severely tried by the excesses into which he had been tempted by the good dinners at the Leone Bianco, were considerably deranged; yet he had not the prudence to abstain from further indulgence on the route, but, ill as he was, did ample justice to the delicacies brought from Venice. The effect of repletion is not less injurious on the temper than on the health, the derangement of the stomach irritating the whole nervous system, and rendering even persons generally good-humoured quite the reverse. Of the truth of this assertion Fitzwarren was soon furnished with ample proof, for Webworth became so sour and peevish, that every movement of the carriage provoked an exclamation of discontent. At one moment, he declared himself half suffocated for want of air, and, when his friend good-naturedly let down all the glasses, he the next complained of chilliness, and expressed his conviction that he had caught a fever.

"Let us stop at the next town, and send for a physician," said Lord Fitzwarren.

"What! trust myself in the hands of an Italian quack? no, no, I'm not such a fool as that! How a man of your fortune, Fitz, can travel without an Eng-

lish doctor does surprise me. What in Heaven's name could tempt you to come abroad without one?"

"Why, simply because it never once entered my head that it might be necessary."

"And why were you to suppose that *you* should be more exempt from illness than other persons?" said Webworth, crossly.

"I never supposed anything about it. I have always had good health, and I take care not to indulge too much in eating."

"Well, that is a good one, Fitz, I must say. Why, I know no one who eats more than you do. I have often remarked your extraordinary appetite. O, what a jolt! This carriage is very ill hung, and the springs are on a confoundedly bad construction. Why don't you have your carriages built by Barker? He's the only man who can turn out an easy travelling-carriage."

"So I think, and therefore I never employ any other coachmaker."

"Well, then, for the nonce he has not succeeded, for this carriage is far from being an easy one. It is not near long enough to allow one to stretch one's legs comfortably."

"Yet I, who have longer ones than yours, Weby, can extend mine to their utmost."

"You are taller certainly, I admit, but I am sure my legs are the longest."

"I'll bet you fifty pounds they are not."

"You are always for deciding everything by a wager, Fitz."

"Yes, because it stops discussions."

"But for those who can't afford to throw away their money, wagers, you must allow, are absurd."

"Axy Beaulieu is not of that opinion."

"Especially when he meets with fellows like yourself, whose gold he so often pockets. There again, what a jolt! By Jove! I am nearly shaken to pieces."

In this manner did Lord Fitzwarren and his *soi-disant* friend journey on, until they reached Naples, Webworth still suffering from dyspepsia, and complaining all the while, and Fitzwarren's patience so exhausted that he determined on not proceeding to Sicily, as he had originally intended, in order to avoid the continuation of a *tête-à-tête*, of which he had already much more than he found agreeable. The first thing he did on arriving at Naples was to send for an English physician established there, to whose care he confided his atrabilious friend, not without having privately explained to him the cause, the effect of which he was called in to prescribe for.

"I had no idea that Weby could be so disagreeable a fellow-traveller," thought the good-natured Fitzwarren. "Fastening such a bore on oneself re-

minds me of the old saying, 'pull a rod to whip yourself.' I must take care how I do this again. But I forget that I need not trouble myself much on this point, for, as I am going to be married" — and he heaved a deep sigh as he recalled this fact to his memory—" I must, in future, travel only with my wife. Well, but, after all, I defy Livy to be half as disagreeable a postchaise companion as Webworth was from Venice here. No, I must do her the justice to admit —though I don't like her, and, what is worse, do all I will I can't persuade myself into the belief that I do care a pin for her—she is a devilish good-tempered, obliging girl, and is very much in love with me. Poor Livy! how it would break her heart if she knew how perfectly indifferent I feel towards her; but I will never let her know it, poor soul! It's enough to be convinced of it myself. Going to marry a woman one does not love is for all the world like going in cold blood, and, funking horridly all the time, to leap a six bar gate, with a deep brook at the other side. I mustn't think of it, for it puts me into the blue devils. If it were to Louisa Sydney that I was going to be married, how differently should I feel! By Jupiter, I should be half mad with joy! How strange it is that I can't get that girl out of my head! How I envy that fellow, Strathern! He is, indeed, a lucky dog to have secured such a prize. I used to like him better than

any other man of my acquaintance, though we had no two ideas in common, until *she* preferred him, and ever since I dislike seeing him, and I really believe I should not be sorry were I to hear he had gone to the other world. And yet, what good would that do me? None in the world! Have I not, like a blockhead, engaged to marry another? But, even were I free, and Strathern dead, Louisa Sydney wouldn't have me. Well, *it is* vexatious to have youth, health, and a large fortune, and yet not be happy; and this is my case. I who used to be as gay as a lark, until this girl turned my head. Perhaps when I get back to England, and have my horses about me, I shall again be as I used to be. Who knows?"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Oh! why should envious Fate decree
That Love should ever subject be
To baseless hopes and groundless fears,
To jealous doubts and starting tears?
'Tis thus he makes his empire known,
When in fond hearts he rears his throne;
And those but little know his might
Who deem he gives alone delight,
For many bitter pangs must they
Endure who Love's stern laws obey.

So wholly engrossed were Mrs. Sydney and her daughter by the chagrin occasioned by the result of their interview with Strathern, that neither of them recollected to give orders to be denied to visitors, a precaution so necessary to be adopted when under the influence of painful emotions. The pride which had enabled Louisa to support that interview with apparent calmness subsided when her lover had withdrawn; and the fond girl, weeping over her disappointed

hopes, now pale and subdued, wondered how she had been able to see him depart for ever, without having betrayed the anguish that was preying on her heart.

"Knowing his unworthiness, and aware of the deception to which he can condescend to stoop, why, why," thought Louisa, "do I still continue to deplore the illusion that is for ever vanished, and to dwell on his image?"

While these painful thoughts were passing in the mind of Louisa Sydney, her mother's was a prey to scarcely less distressing ones. In whom could she henceforth trust, when Strathern, whom she had believed to be as nearly faultless as erring man could be, had proved so unworthy? All the hopes so fondly cherished of seeing her daughter consigned to the protecting care of an honourable man, on the stability of whose affection and principles she could rely as securities for her happiness, were now fallen to the ground; and she felt that, with a nature like that of her child's, it would be long, if ever, before she should recover from the shock inflicted by the perfidy of him on whom she had bestowed her affection. How disagreeable, too, would it be, to meet those who had been aware of the engagement between Louisa and Strathern, and who would, doubtless, make a thousand comments on the subject, and circulate as many reports! Mrs. Sydney, though a most amiable, was, in

some things, a weak and timid woman; and never did she experience a more painful consciousness of her own helplessness than at the present crisis, when, in a foreign land, without any male protector, she felt that her daughter's broken-off marriage would become a general topic of animadversion. What was to be done? Would it not be advisable to leave Rome at once, and so avoid another meeting with Strathern, and the necessity of entering into any explanations with the inquisitive *soi-disant* friends who would be likely to ask them? Yes, it would be best to leave Rome forthwith; and, having come to this decision, she was on the point of communicating it to her daughter, when the door of her *salon* was thrown open, and "Il Signor Rhymer" was announced by her Italian servant. Of all visitors, he was precisely the one from whom she would the most shrink at such a moment, for from his keen and observant eye she well knew that the least change in the countenances of her daughter and herself could not be concealed, while, from a person of his cynical turn, and cold, sneering manner, she could expect but little sympathy.

"Have you been unwell, fair lady?" said he, looking gravely, but kindly, at Louisa.

"Yes, I have been suffering from a severe cold in my head," replied she, with a much more steady tone of voice than her mother thought she could have

assumed, but *pride*, that predominant feature in Louisa's character, had again resumed its influence, the moment she felt the searching eye of Mr. Rhymer fixed on her pale face, and she would have suffered untold agonies, than have let him seen that she was unhappy.

"A cold in the head," repeated Mr. Rhymer, "is a very disagreeable malady, but with young people all colds, save those of the heart, are soon got over. Ladies, I must do them the justice to admit, are not so subject to chilliness of that part as men are. Don't you agree with me, Mrs. Sydney?"

"I am so little versed in the subject," replied Mrs. Sydney, "that you could not appeal to any person less capable of pronouncing an opinion."

"Your fair daughter, perhaps, can give me hers."

"My experience has not yet enabled me to be a judge of men's hearts," said Louisa; but her changeful cheek betrayed that the subject was a painful one to her. Had her voice been as tremulous as her cheek was pale, Mr. Rhymer would have spared her any further trial, for a sentiment of pity was awakened in his breast when he beheld one so young, fair, and gifted, with the traces of such deep and recent sorrow in her countenance; but her self-possession deceived even his scrutinizing glance, and led him to believe that the grief, of which the marks were yet

visible, had more to do with the pride than the affections of the lovely being before him; and this conviction silenced the commiseration and sympathy he might otherwise have experienced for her.

"Have you seen Strathern to day?" inquired he.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Sydney, "he was here a short time ago."

"I saw him at St. Peter's, escorting *one* of the most beautiful young women I ever saw—mind, I say *one*, and not *the* most beautiful, for that, in this company, would be not only uncivil, but untrue."

Mr. Rhymer looked at Louisa Sydney as he spoke, and observed that she blushed up to her very temples, and then became as pale as marble.

"Who is this new beauty?" demanded he. "I thought I knew every handsome face in Rome, but this one I never previously beheld. From her being alone with Strathern, I conclude she must be nearly related to him; and yet I don't remember his having any near female relatives. You of course know who she is?" and he turned to Mrs. Sydney.

"No, I really don't," replied she, looking as embarrassed and pained at her daughter.

"I asked to be presented to his fair companion, a liberty which I conceived my age, and my having known him from his childhood, privileged me to take, but it seemed *he* was of a different way of thinking,

for he appeared annoyed by the request—so indeed did the lady—muttered something only half intelligible about his taking some other opportunity of presenting me, and hurried away, leaving me looking, as all disappointed men do, very foolish. I concluded that here I should learn the name of the beautiful lady who has excited my interest as well as curiosity; but, since you ladies are not acquainted with it, I must conclude that the same reason which influenced our friend Strathern to conceal it from *you* extended to me also."

Louisa Sydney, although tortured by the pangs of jealousy almost beyond her power of endurance, made a desperate and a successful effort to conceal her agony; for what will not pride effect in a female heart where it is deeply rooted? She affected to be busily occupied in arranging some drawings in a portfolio on the table near her sofa; but Mrs. Sydney, less skilled in concealing her feelings, betrayed her emotion so evidently that Mr. Rhymer saw at once that something painful had occurred between both ladies and Strathern, and believed it was, in some way or other, connected with the beautiful woman he had seen with the latter.

"I am come to take your commands for England," said Mr. Rhymer. "I leave the Eternal City to-morrow, probably for the last time, for at my age I cannot look forward to crossing the Alps again. If I

can take any parcel, or be of any use to you, fair ladies, do not hesitate to employ me."

Mrs. Sydney and Louisa thanked him, but declined troubling him with any parcel or commission; and he took his leave, pointedly expressing his hopes that when they again met he should find them in better health and spirits. "I don't think," were his parting words, "that of late Rome has agreed with either of you, and I shall be glad to hear you have left it."

When certain that he had left the house, Mrs. Sydney rang the bell, and desired that no visiters were to be admitted.

"The Signor Strathern is of course not included in this order," said the servant.

"There are no exceptions," observed Mrs. Sydney; and the man, with a look of extreme surprise, withdrew. The fond mother approached the sofa on the pillow of which Louisa had hid her face, and the weeping girl was pressed to her heart, and their tears mingled for some minutes. "Let us leave Rome, my child. To-morrow let us go. We shall be less wretched any where than here."

"Yes, dearest mother, let us depart. Let us go to-morrow! I long to be away from a place where everything reminds me of *him*. Oh! mother, who could have dreamed that he would have been so lost

to every sense of propriety, to common decency itself, as to appear publicly with a person he dared not name to us, and to whom he dared not present Mr. Rhymer! —to enter a temple dedicated to the Deity with such a one in the open day, and with the certainty of meeting many of those who know his engagement to me! Oh! it is too dreadful, and proves that he is indeed lost to every sense of honour and of shame."

Mrs. Sydney made every arrangement for leaving Rome the next day. Louisa and she had long wished to visit Milan, and thence to proceed to the Lake of Como to spend some time. They now determined on carrying this intention into effect, and busied themselves in preparations for their approaching journey. Strathern, meanwhile, had no sooner handed Lady Delmington to the carriage in which her husband was waiting for her, than, after having declined the pressing invitation of his friend to accompany them in their drive around Rome, and to dine with them on *this* their last evening there, than he represented, in a whisper in Lord Delmington's ear, the meeting with Rhymer, his request to be presented to Lady Delmington, which could not be complied with until her marriage was acknowledged, and that, from the refusal, that gentleman would doubtlessly form the most erroneous impressions relative to her, and not only form them, but convey them to others.

"He will be sure to tell some dear friends of mine, with whom I am so situated, that I ought to have no concealments," continued Strathern, "that I refused to present a lady with whom he saw me walking *tête-à-tête*."

"Ah! I see, my dear friend, that you, too, are about to become a Benedict," replied Lord Delmington. "I therefore release you from your promise of secrecy—at least, to the dear friends in question."

Strathern hastened back to Mrs. Sydney, determined to ask an explanation of the cause of the coldness of his reception in the morning. He felt anxious too to acquaint his affianced wife and her mother why he had absented himself from their society the preceding evening, and who the lady was with whom Mr. Rhymer had seen him at St. Peter's, before that gentleman had an opportunity of mentioning the circumstance to them, as he felt convinced he would not fail to do on the first occasion.

Every angry feeling had subsided in the breast of the lover, as, with rapid steps, he proceeded towards the abode of Mrs. Sydney. Two hours' absence from Louisa had given him time to reflect on the folly on his part of having left her without demanding an explanation of the cause of her altered manner; and so disposed was he not only to pardon any ebullition of

temper produced, as he believed it must have been, by pique or wounded feelings, occasioned by his having resisted her desire of returning to her the previous evening, that he now censured himself for not having, on first seeing his beloved Louisa that day, apologized for his absence, and assured her of his regret for it.

"How absurd of me," thought Strathern, "to allow my misplaced pride to prevent me from atoning for the previous night's neglect of complying with her wishes! How unlover-like has my conduct been! but I will solicit her pardon for this my first offence, and she will—she must grant it. Well might her fond mother look coldly on me, when she saw that, instead of apologizing to her daughter for my unprecedented absence of a whole evening from her presence, I left her without even asking if I had offended, and acted as if *I* had been the ill-used person; and so at the time I considered myself. The old infirmity, pride, had mastered my better feelings; but now my heart yearns to confess my error, and to see the beautiful face of my Louisa again beaming with smiles at my approach, and to have that dear, fair little hand accorded to me, and pressed to my lips. She looked pale, too, this morning, and her eyes had not their usual lustre. She was probably ill, but too proud to acknowledge it; for my Louisa partakes my besetting sin, pride. What a brute I was to leave her under

such circumstances, instead of remaining until I had won her pardon, and seen her restored to her usual spirits. O, Pride, Pride! by thee are weak mortals still hurried on to wound those they best love, and to inflict pain on themselves and others! I must conquer this failing, or how small a chance of the happiness I have promised myself in wedlock will be mine, if I allow its dictates to influence my conduct! I ought to have remembered that pride is also her besetting sin, and to have made allowance for it, instead of which I have irritated this morbid feeling into action, and permitted her to suffer from its consequences two whole hours, an age to one with such susceptible feelings as hers. But I will humble myself, and crave pardon, and all will be well. Oh, how I long to be forgiven!"

Such were the thoughts that passed through the mind of Strathern, until he arrived at the door of Mrs. Sydney. He was as usual ascending the stairs without inquiring whether the ladies were at home, when the Italian servant stopped him, and declared that the signora and signorina were gone out.

"Which way — in what direction?" demanded Strathern, greatly disappointed at not finding them.

"I was absent from the house when the ladies went out," replied the man; but an air of embarrassment and confusion in his countenance when he met the

keen glance of his questioner, revealed to Strathern that the servant was not speaking the truth.

"The ladies *are* at home, but have desired you not to admit visitors. It is so, is it not? Come, speak the truth, and tell me, Leonardo."

"*Si, signor, è vero.*"

"But I, you know, am not a mere visitor, Leonardo, therefore, you may be assured, am not included in the prohibition."

Leonardo shook his head gravely, and answered, "*Si, signor, si.* When I got my orders, I thought it so impossible that *sua excellenza could* be included, that I asked the question, and *la signora*, in the presence of *la signorina*, positively told me there was *no* exception."

"Will you, my good Leonardo, go and tell the ladies that I am here—that I desire above all things to see them—that I have something important to communicate."

"*Si, signor*," said the good-natured Italian, who, aware that Strathern was to be the husband of Miss Sydney, concluded that some little lovers' quarrel had occasioned a momentary coldness on the part of the ladies, which it only required an interview with the Signor Strathern to set right, and, glad to be the medium of so desirable an event, he hurried to deliver the message. The man looked so much interested in

the success of the message of which he was the bearer, that Mrs. Sydney did not reprove him for his disobedience to her orders.

"You hear the request, dearest," said the anxious mother. "Shall we assent to it?"

"No, mother, not for worlds. Oh! never let me see him again."

"Tell Mr. Strathern that we are occupied, and can see *no one*," said Mrs. Sydney, gravely, "and be sure, Leonardo, that you admit no person whatever."

Never, in his whole life, had Strathern's pride been exposed to so rude a trial as while he waited for the return of the servant with Mrs. Sydney's message. She would not—*could* not refuse to see him. After all, how slight had been his offence, taking it even in its gravest point of view, and how great was the indignity offered to him, the affianced husband of her daughter, in thus including his name in the list of prohibited visitors! Even Leonardo had felt this; he, Strathern, saw he had. Yes, it was an indignity offered to him, and he keenly felt it; but he loved Louisa Sydney too fondly, too devotedly, to resent it as he otherwise should, and he would quell every emotion of wounded pride rather than be another hour kept from her presence. His heart throbbed violently when he heard the footsteps of Leonardo descending the stairs. How slowly he walked! Was it possible

that Mrs. Sydney had refused to admit him to her presence? No, it could not be; and yet the slow and measured steps of the servant denoted that *he* could not be the bearer of good tidings. One glance at Leonardo's face convinced Strathern that he bore a refusal to his request, and the blood mounted impetuously to his very temples.

"The signora and the signorina desire me to say that they will see *no one*," said the servant, looking so sorrowfully while he uttered the words as to prove the regret with which he pronounced them.

"It is well," said Strathern, drawing himself up to the full height of his tall person, his pride irritated to the utmost degree, and his breast filled with indignation; and he turned from the door so lately sought with a heart throbbing with fond emotions, now deeply lacerated, and alive only to the insult he had received. No, it was plain that he had been trifled with, and his affection made the sport of a vain girl's caprice. But was it thus that he was to be dismissed, without a word, or even a line of explanation, and for so trivial a cause as his not having returned the previous night to see Louisa? It was, it could be nothing else than a pretext for breaking with him; but how unworthy was such conduct on their part! And Mrs. Sydney, too, how he had been deceived in her! He returned to his hotel, his mind in a state of agitation not to be

described. He gave orders to be denied to all visitors, and took up his pen to write to Louisa one more appeal before he could resign her for ever. Love mastered indignation, and a gush of tenderness flooded his eyes, and fell on the paper as he endeavoured to portray his feelings on it. Yes, the manly, the proud Strathern wept in uncontrollable emotion as he recalled the happy hours passed with his first, his only love, and contrasted them with the dreary ones which he must henceforth be doomed to spend, if separated from her. But no, he dared not anticipate a life so wretched as his must be, if he could not succeed in making his peace with Louisa. Existence without her would, indeed, be a blank, the more gloomy and cheerless from the bright prospects of the future he had allowed himself to indulge ever since she had consented to be his. He commenced a letter, but he found the words so tame and spiritless, so far from expressing his feelings, that he tore the paper, and began another. That shared the same fate as its predecessor, and he was about to make a third effort when his servant entered his room to announce that Lord Delmington, on entering his hotel after a drive, had burst a blood-vessel, was supposed to be dying, and that Lady Delmington, half distracted, had sent to entreat his immediate presence. Shocked and grieved by this painful intelligence, Strathern instantly hurried off to his friend, whom he

found in the utmost danger. Though prohibited from speaking by his physicians, he no sooner saw Strathern enter, than he addressed him—

"Do not leave me, my dear friend; and, should I die, be a friend to my poor Mary."

The exertion of uttering even these few words was followed by a fresh discharge of blood from the ruptured vessel in his chest, and, as he sank back exhausted on his pillow, pale as marble, with the sanguine stream flowing from his mouth, Strathern expected every moment that he would breathe his last. The physician gave strict injunctions that he should be kept perfectly quiet, and told Strathern that, as Lord Delmington appeared to attach such importance to *his* presence, he hoped he would not leave him until he was more composed. Lady Delmington moved not from the side of her husband's bed. There she sat, with her eyes fixed on his face, with an expression of such unutterable love and devotion in those dark and tearful orbs, that even the physician, though accustomed to similar scenes of sadness and trial, was moved by the intensity of her feelings, and the control she exercised over them, lest the sight of her sorrow should excite the mind of her suffering husband. It was beautiful to behold how she struggled to appear calm and hopeful when her heart was tortured by apprehensions for the life of him on whom her every hope, nay, her very

existence, depended. And Lord Delmington, too, took courage from her composed aspect, and looked at her as if his thoughts were occupied solely about her. Whenever he attempted to speak, she implored him to be silent, and then he would appeal with his eyes to his friend, as if to recommend his adored wife to his care. Every thought of his own griefs was forgotten by Strathern, in the anxiety occasioned by the danger of his friend, and his sympathy for Lady Delmington. How often did he wish, during the long hours that he passed in that darkened and silent room, that he was on his former habits of familiar good understanding with Mrs. Sydney, and that he could have requested her to extend her motherly care to the youthful and lovely being before him, bowed down by affliction, yet struggling so heroically to suppress every symptom of it! Yes, Louisa, his own beautiful and kind-hearted affianced wife would have been as a ministering angel to that sorrowing young creature, and his poor friend would have been soothed by seeing his wife under the protection of women so good and pure as Mrs. Sydney and her daughter.

While the mind of Strathern was filled with such thoughts, evening faded into night, and night passed slowly and heavily along, the poor sufferer sometimes falling into a disturbed slumber, from which he would awaken to search for his tender nurse, and then to

look at his friend. Never did the lids of that fair and youthful watcher by the sick couch droop during the long and dreary hours of that night, as, with her eyes fixed on the face of the sleeper, she listened with inexpressible anxiety to his low breathing, and, when he awoke, met his glance with a smile, such as angels might be supposed to bestow on slumbering infants.

"What love can equal that of woman?" thought Strathern, as he marked the devotion of the young wife. "Who like her can forget self in the deep, the all-engrossing care of one dear to her. Ah! well may we overlook and pardon the slight defects peculiar to the lovely sex, in consideration of the many virtues they possess, and the inestimable blessings they confer on us. Yes, Scott, that profound reader of the human heart, was right when he said of them—

> "O! woman, in our hours of ease,
> Uncertain, coy, and hard to please;
> When pain and sickness wring the brow,
> A ministering angel thou."

The feelings of Strathern became softened towards the whole sex, as he witnessed the unwearying tenderness of the fair specimen of it seated opposite to him, and as he pictured to himself his affianced wife in a similar position, watching over his own couch, if he were chained to it by illness. It has been said that a man cannot entertain a real affection for one woman,

without experiencing a sentiment of regard for the whole sex. Strathern acknowledged the truth of the assertion; for the admiration excited by Lady Delmington's conduct, during the heavy trial under which it had been called forth, extended itself to all womankind, centering itself chiefly on the fair creature who was never absent from his thoughts, and at whose feet he hoped to prostrate himself on the coming day, and to implore oblivion of all sins of omission, for those of commission he was sure he had none to avow.

Day at length dawned, its grey light gleamed through the shutters, and the coldness peculiar to early morn made itself felt by the watchers of the sick couch. Strathern's frame involuntarily trembled as the chillness extended over it; but the anxious wife, though her pale face assumed a bluish tint, betrayed no consciousness of the cold—no shudder passed over *her* delicate form. There she sat, forgetful of all, save the danger of the beloved object, from whose face she never even for a moment averted her anxious gaze. And now the chill grey of morning was changed to a brighter hue; the sun by degrees began to let his beams pierce the clouds, until they flooded the sky with light; the birds welcomed the bright luminary with their joyous notes; and the garish light of day almost extinguished the pale and flickering gleam of the night-lamp.

The slumberer awoke, and would have spoken, but the ever-watchful care of love prevented the exertion, and honeyed words of affection were softly and lowly poured into his ear, beseeching him to be silent. The physician, who had remained in the next room ready to be called in case of danger, was now summoned, and pronounced his patient to be doing well. Perfect quiet and repose were commanded; and, with strict attention to these, he declared that he entertained no doubt of Lord Delmington's recovery.

Strathern was now released from his station at the bedside, and, having pledged himself to return to it in a short time, left the hotel, and was proceeding to his own abode, tired and jaded from his sleepless night, and the anxiety of the last twenty-four hours, when two travelling carriages with post-horses, preceded by a mounted courrier, drove past him. At one glance he recognised them to be Mrs. Sydney's, yet he could hardly believe the evidence of his sight; but, as if to make assurance doubly sure, he saw Louisa, whose eyes met his, turn away from his gaze, without even a bow to mark her recognition of him, and, brief as had been his glance of her, he noticed that her countenance expressed anger and disdain at the *rencontre*. For a moment he stood as if transfixed, gazing after the carriages: but the next, forgetful of everything but that his beloved was leaving Rome, without an explanation,

and in anger with him, and maddened by the accumulated emotions that filled his heart, he rushed after the carriages, determined to implore, nay, to demand, a hearing from Mrs. Sydney and her daughter.

It seemed, however, as if the fates conspired against him, for the postillions put their horses into so brisk a trot, that they were soon out of sight, and, panting and heated from his useless pursuit, Strathern stopped to lean against a house. Some stray persons going to their work looked at him, shrugged their shoulders, and remarked to each other on the folly of the *foresteiri*, who turned night into day, for it was evident that the signor before them had not been in bed. This remark reminded the subject of it of the disorder of his dress, and then came the thought of how strange his apparition at such an hour, and in such a guise, must have appeared to Miss Sydney. But every thing was against him. An evil destiny seemed to pursue him for the last two days—the arrival of the Delmingtons, then the illness of his poor friend, and now the being seen, at early morning, in the garb of the previous day, with his face pallid, his beard unshorn, and hair in disorder. Yes, everything conspired against him, and it was useless to struggle with his fate.

The departure of Mrs. Sydney incontestibly proved that she and her daughter wished to give no oppor-

tunity for explanation—that they had determined on breaking off the engagement between Louisa and himself, consequently all was now at an end. Strathern's heart sickened as this conviction entered his mind. His pride, which for the last day had been vanquished by his love, now began to resume its empire; and with a bitterness of feeling never previously experienced, he vowed that, insulted and spurned as he had been, without any cause to justify such ill-treatment, he would no more seek a reconciliation with those who had so wronged him, but bear up as well as he could against the deep and poignant regret that he well knew must for years, if not for ever, be his. The thought occurred to him, that probably Mrs. Sydney might have left a letter for him at the hotel, and, unwilling to let his servant go for it, or to leave its delivery to the waiters at the hotel where she had resided, he determined to go there at once himself to demand it.

He turned his steps to the well known house, but oh! with what different feelings to those with which he had hitherto been wont to approach it! No letter or message had been left. The ladies had only the day before decided on going, and meant, it was believed, to proceed to England. With this vague intelligence was Strathern compelled to be satisfied. Indignation helped to enable him to bear up against

the regret that might otherwise have unmanned him; and he proceeded to his hotel, where he would gladly have remained, to give way in solitude to the sad thoughts that filled his breast, had not his promise to return to Lord Delmington obliged him to forego that melancholy indulgence.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A female glutton how I hate!
With eyes intent upon her plate,
Partaking eagerly of all,
Fish, flesh, and fowl, within her call.
Such women you are sure to find
With manners coarse, and vulgar mind;
And more of animal, I ween,
Than gentle dame are in them seen.

All preparations being made, Mrs. Maclaurin and suite left Rome *en route* for Naples, the lady and her *dame de compagnie* occupying a travelling chariot, and her attendants following in a roomy coach. She would fain have had Lord Alexander Beaulieu take the place of Mrs. Bernard; but his lordship, under the plea of such a step exposing her to censure, declined the proposal, and preceded her in his own postchaise, acting, as he said, as her *arant garde*. Aware of the valuable jewels in her possession—in which, from the prospect of his soon having a personal property in

them, he took a very lively interest—he advised the having a strong escort from Terracina, lest the brigands should make a descent from the mountains, and bear off the treasure.

"Oh! what a country!" exclaimed Mrs. Maclaurin, "when people can't travel without a guard. How unlike dear old England, where you may go from one end of it to the other with half the jewels in the land, without ever requiring any one to look after them except yourself or your servants! Well, let me once get back, and if any one catches me going abroad again, I'll give 'em leave to pillage me, that's all."

"By Jove! that's a good hint," thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu; "for, now I know her antipathy to the Continent, I will take care to spend the greater part of my time there, and *plante* madame in England."

They had not proceeded more than three posts from Rome, when Mrs. Maclaurin complained of hunger, and insisted on having the comestibles, with which she had largely provided herself, unpacked. She devoured with avidity what was set before her, declaring all the time that the things were so bad that she could hardly eat them, and washed down her repast with copious draughts of wine, unmixed with water. Her future husband turned from her with disgust, as he beheld the wonderful feats her appetite performed;

and even the servants who attended at her luncheon eyed her with surprise. But she was too well occupied to observe the impression she produced; and even had she noticed it, it would not have had the least effect in modifying her gross habit of eating and drinking. No! Mrs. Maclaurin was not a woman to be deterred from indulging her taste by any dread of the opinion of others, and the thought of there being any impropriety in her *gourmandise* never entered her head.

"She will inevitably destroy her health," thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, as he observed the various viands piled on her plate rapidly disappear, and saw glass after glass emptied. "What a cormorant! If, however, these gross habits should abridge her days, I shall hail with pleasure her indulgence in them; but I must spare myself as much as possible the disgust of beholding the operation I have just now witnessed."

When crossing the Marais Pontine, Mrs. Maclaurin, who had heard of the danger of slumbering while exposed to the impure air of that region, commanded Mrs. Bernard to prevent her sleeping — a difficult task; for the repletion produced by her copious luncheon rendered her extremely disposed to enjoy a *siesta*.

"If you were not as dull as ditch-water, and

wholly incapable of amusing me, I might easily be kept awake," said she to her much-enduring companion; "but no wonder I feel drowsy, shut up with such a silent mope as you are. When persons offer themselves as *dams de company*, they ought to know that one of the first duties of their place is to amuse their mistress. Now, you never amused me for a single moment since you entered my service. Quite the contrary, you have always *enweed* me to death, as Justin says. Indeed, if I only happen to look at you, you set me yawning"—and suiting the action to the word, Mrs. Maclaurin opened her jaws to their widest extent, and soon after, by certain nasal sounds, gave notice that she was in the arms of Morpheus. Mindful of her injunctions to be awakened, Mrs. Bernard ventured gently to touch Mrs. Maclaurin's shoulder, and called "Madam! madam!" but finding this produced no effect, she proceeded to more energetic measures, and calling more loudly "Madam! madam!" she shook that lady a little roughly, who, thus suddenly awoke from a slumber in which she had been dreaming of being attacked by brigands, she really imagined she was in their hands, and, in the first moment of being aroused, she struck at Mrs. Bernard with all her might and main, crying out "Thieves! thieves!—murder!—help, help!" while Mrs. Bernard screamed aloud, as blow after blow from the

robust fists of Mrs. Maclaurin came vigorously down on her face, head, and shoulders. The postillions heard the cries, and stopped their horses; the servants descended from the rumble, and opened the carriage door, when poor Mrs. Bernard was discovered sobbing and weeping, her face bruised, her nose bleeding, and her bonnet crushed, and Mrs. Maclaurin, who was now quite awake, loudly reproaching her for having allowed her to sleep even for a moment, declaring that she was convinced that the malaria had already attacked her, owing to the negligence of that stupid fool, who allowed her to sleep, Heaven only knew how long. Lord Alexander Beaulieu's postillion stopped also, and his lordship, wondering what could be the matter, left his carriage and came to the door of Mrs. Maclaurin's. He found that lady flushed and fevered, uttering reproaches against her helpless companion, who, seriously hurt, was sobbing in the corner of the chariot.

"Served you right for letting me sleep," exclaimed Mrs. Maclaurin. "If you had kept me awake, I should not have dreamt of being attacked by the brigands, and would not have beaten you. But what was I to think or do, when, in the middle of my dream of them horrid fellows pulling and hauling me, I found myself shaken? Wasn't it quite natural for me to defend myself? And so I did; and, if you are hurt,

you have no one to blame but yourself. So it's no use your going on weeping and wailing, as if all the bones in your body were broken, when you have only got a few knocks; and, as for your bonnet being spoilt, I'll give you a present of a new one when we get to Naples. So leave off crying, for it's a thing I can't bear."

Cold-hearted and selfish as was Lord Alexander Beaulieu, he was shocked and disgusted at witnessing the utter want of feeling of his future wife. He saw, too, the smiles and nods interchanged by the servants of Mrs. Maclaurin, and felt a sentiment of pity for the unfortunate *dame de compagnie*, who was the victim of that coarse and unfeminine woman. He despatched a servant to the next house to obtain a glass of water for her, of which, having partaken a portion, which did her good, the poor lady was restored to some degree of composure.

"I'm dreadfully thirsty, I can tell you," said Mrs. Maclaurin; "but nobody seems to think of *my* comfort, after all I've gone through in that terrible dream, and the dreadful fatigue I endured in defending myself, as I thought, against the brigands."

A second glass of water was obtained; but the lady, having declared her aversion to plain cold water, which, she asserted, always made her ill, proposed having some wine unpacked, to mix with it; and,

though Lord Alexander Beaulieu reminded her of the danger of malaria in stopping in the Marais Pontine, she would not relinquish the draught of wine-and-water she wished for. At length, having satisfied her thirst, the carriages moved rapidly on, Mrs. Maclaurin warning her *dame de compagnie* not to let her sleep again, under penalty of the chance of a repetition of the blows already received.

Seated in his postchaise, Lord Alexander Beaulieu's reflections were any thing but agreeable, as he was whirled along. His horror and detestation of his future wife increased every day—nay, every hour —as circumstances brought to light some new proof of her selfishness and total want of feeling. "Not one redeeming point can I discover in her," thought he. "But perhaps it is better I should not. Were she less odious, less unworthy, I might feel some compunction for wedding her; hating her as I do, and for the conduct I am determined on adopting towards her when we are married; but, as it is, I shall have no self-reproach, and she shall pay for all her sins; for the wealth that purchases her a husband, she shall find has given her a master."

When the travellers halted for the night, Mrs. Maclaurin found great fault with the inn and its accommodation; she, nevertheless, did ample honour to the repast ready for her arrival, and acknowledged

that *curriers* (as she pronounced *courriers*) were most useful persons on a journey, declaring that when she returned to England she would never go anywhere without one, alleging that it was so pleasant to find dinner ready when one arrived, instead of being kept waiting for it, which always put her out of temper. Mrs. Bernard was so unwell that she was obliged to go to bed as soon as she descended from the carriage; and, had it not been for the humanity of the mistress of the inn, she would have been totally neglected, Mrs. Maclaurin not bestowing a thought on her, and Mademoiselle Justine emulating that lady's indifference towards the unfortunate *dame de compagnie*. Lord Alexander Beaulieu reminded his future wife that some care ought to be bestowed on the poor invalid.

"Oh! I dare say some of my people will look after her," replied that heartless person; but *he*, having little confidence in this vague assurance, went to the mistress of the inn, and solicited her good offices for the solitary and suffering woman. Glad was Lord Alexander Beaulieu when the journey was over, although it brought him still nearer to the goal which, notwithstanding the wealth it would bring, he could not contemplate without feelings of disgust. To be relieved from the constraint imposed on him by the continued presence of his odious *fiancée* gave him

pleasure, and in the bustle of a crowded city he felt less overpowered by the sense of his position than when isolated with her *en route*. The travellers took up their abode at the Grand Bretagne, in the Strada di Caija, where the best suite of rooms in the hotel had been prepared for their reception, and where an excellent dinner awaited their arrival.

"Ah! this is something like," exclaimed Mrs. Maclaurin, as she entered the spacious apartments assigned to her. "Bordoni, I must say, has got me very good rooms. I am dying with hunger; so pray, my lord, let us dine without dressing."

"Don't you think it would refresh you to have a warm bath before dinner?" suggested *le mari futur*.

"Oh! no, I couldn't wait. I'm much too hungry."

Bordoni, the *courrier*, was too well acquainted with Mrs. Maclaurin's habits and taste to have forgotten to have dinner served as quickly as possible after her arrival; and, while Lord Alexander Beaulieu was advising her to have a bath, dinner was announced.

"Yes, Bordoni is a capital *currier*—that there's no denying. I know by the good smell that he has managed to get me some rich gravy soup. This, and a glass or two of old Madeira, will refresh me more than all the baths in the world. Capital soup—strong and plenty of pepper. It is the best I have tasted since I left England."

"Oh! the barbarian," thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, who found the said *potage* abominable.

"I'm no admirer of baths," resumed the lady, "and always think people must be very dirty who require them. There were some ladies in the same hotel with me at Brighton, who used to have warm baths three or four times a week; but, for my part, I don't see the necessity of them."

Mrs. Bernard looked embarrassed, and Lord Alexander Beaulieu changed the subject.

"I'll try another glass of that Madeira. Will you join me, my lord?"

"With your permission, I prefer some light French wine. I seldom drink any other."

"Then you are wrong, for them French wines are wishy-washy stuff, enough to spoil the strongest stomach, always excepting champagne. *That is* a pleasant wine, and puts one into good spirits. I'll drink a glass of champagne with you, if you have no objection?"

"Let me recommend you a glass of wine, Mrs. Bernard," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, shocked at observing the total neglect that poor woman experienced at the hands of Mrs. Maclaurin. "It will do you good, after the fatigue of your journey."

"I seldom drink wine, my lord, and am fearful of venturing just now, as my head still aches."

"Stuff — nonsense! When his lordship condescends to ask you to take a glass of wine with him, it is very rude of you to refuse. You never see *me* behave in that manner. There, take your glass of wine without any more to do, and be thankful that you meet with such kindness."

The blood rose to Mrs. Bernard's temples, and a tear trembled in her eye; but she raised the glass of wine poured out for her to her lips, and, having tasted it, laid it down.

"Look at her," said Mrs. Maclaurin; "that's what she does every day. Just tastes the wine as if it was vinegar, and then lets it go away. I hate such squeamishness, for my part, for I don't see why any one should be ashamed or afraid to drink a few glasses of wine."

"I have not been accustomed to do so, madam."

"To be sure you have not—how could you afford it? But when it costs you nothing, you needn't refuse it. What! a piece of roast beef. Ah! if it had some fat to it, I could almost fancy myself in dear Old England. I dote on the inside slice of a sirloin of roast beef, with plenty of horseradish and gravy, and mashed potatoes; but it's no use thinking of such good things out of England, for nowhere else can they be had. Oh! take away my plate; this stuff is no more like English beef than chalk is to cheese. What a country! where one can't get so much as a bit of good roast beef."

Dinner had only been a few minutes removed, when the door of the *salle-à-manger* was thrown open, and, "Milor Fitzvarrins" being announced by the Italian waiter, in came Lord Fitzwarren. He started back on seeing that his friend Lord Alexander Beaulieu was not alone, and would have retreated, but Mrs. Maclaurin, to the extreme discomfiture of her future spouse, stood up, and said, "I beg, my lord, you will sit down without ceremony, and take a glass of wine."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu had risen from his chair, with the intention of conducting his unwelcome visitor into the next room, in order to avoid making him acquainted with Mrs. Maclaurin; but that lady, determined not to let this opportunity of adding another lord to the list of her acquaintance escape, defeated his intention. Fitzwarren, unskilled in controlling or concealing his emotions, stared with astonishment at Mrs. Maclaurin, and then at his friend, but, obeying the repeated desire of the lady, sat down.

"I heard only five minutes ago that you were here, Axy," said he, "and so hurried off to see you, little dreaming that you were not alone. I hope, ma'am," continued he, bowing to Mrs. Maclaurin, "that you'll excuse me for breaking in upon you in this abrupt manner."

"Pray, don't mention it, my lord; I am very happy to make your acquaintance."

"If I don't mistake, ma'am, this is not our first meeting. I think I had the pleasure of seeing you one night at Rome, at a masked ball," and Fitzwarren's good-natured face relaxed into a smile at the recollection of the lady's appearance and conduct on that occasion, while Lord Alexander Beaulieu's became flushed with shame.

"Yes; now I remember your face, my lord. It was at the *ball-cost-chew-me* I saw you. You may recollect I appeared there as the Queen of Scots, and wore a great many diamonds — indeed, more than any other lady at the ball."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu sat on thorns, while his friend, much amused, entered heartily into the spirit of quizzing the absurd person before him.

"But won't you have some wine and fruit?" resumed Mrs. Maclaurin, on hospitable thoughts intent. "Why, Lord Alexander, you don't take care of your friend. You know that any acquaintance of *yours* is very welcome to me."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Fitzwarren. "You are right. I don't think, to tell you the truth, that Axy *does* seem glad to see an old friend, and, were it not for your kindness, I should really think that I was an unwelcome intruder."

"Your lordship must not think so; must he, Lord Alexander? I'm sure I have the greatest pleasure in seeing you, and in a foreign country; and, above all,

in such a place as Italy, it's quite delightful to see English faces, especially if they are not impudent and uncivil, like some of those I met at Rome. Would you believe it, my lord, there was an ugly old woman there, with two ill-looking, insolent daughters, who behaved so rudely to me one day at the Carnival, that I was obliged to give them a piece of my mind."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu made several signs to Mrs. Maclaurin to stop, for he feared every moment that she would name Lady Wellerby and the Ladies Olivia and Sophia; but she, not comprehending his winks and frowns, turned, and provokingly asked him what he meant? This *mal-à-propos* question increased his embarrassment, which his friend Lord Fitzwarren, who had often been piqued and mystified by him, greatly enjoyed.

"And so the ladies at Rome behaved ill to you?" observed he, desirous of drawing out the subject of her grievances, and of tormenting Lord Alexander.

"Yes, my lord—shamefully. I went as a sultan to the Carnival....."

"The devil you did!" exclaimed Fitzwarren, bursting into an immoderate fit of laughter.

"Mrs. Maclaurin means as a sultana," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, getting red in the face, and biting his lip.

"Well, sultan or sultana, it's all the same," inter-

rupted Mrs. Maclaurin. "What right had they to turn their backs on me when I spoke civilly to them? If that's what they call manners, I can tell 'em they know little of politeness."

"Don't think any more about them, I entreat you," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, anxious to put an end to the subject.

"But if it relieves this amiable lady's mind to tell me how ill-used she was, you ought not to prevent her," observed Lord Fitzwarren, assuming an air of great sympathy with Mrs. Maclaurin.

"Ay, my lord, that's what I say. I don't know, I'm sure, why Lord Alexander should wish to stop my telling his friend what hurt my feelings so much; and I am greatly obleeged to you for taking such an interest in my case. But, had you seen me bruised and battered from head to foot that day, it would have melted a heart of stone."

"What! did the ladies you referred to proceed to such lengths as that?"

"Oh, no, my lord, *they* did not pelt me; it was the mob that did that. But I gave them as good as they brought, I warrant me, and pelted them as hard as I could, until the police arrested me."

Lord Fitzwarren now opened wide his eyes, and stared at the lady, who, excited by the recollection of her trials on that eventful day, poured out a large bumper of wine, and drank it off at one draught.

"The very thoughts of what I suffered on that occasion overpowers me," resumed she; "and if that person you see there," pointing to Mrs. Bernard, "had but shown a proper spirit, I'd have had the best of it, for I was determined never to give in."

"Right—quite right," observed Lord Fitzwarren. "I honour your courage, and, had I been there, would have stood by you to the last."

"Thank your lordship; I'm very sensible of your kindness."

"Then the marks of that lady's face"—and he looked at Mrs. Bernard's—"were inflicted by the mob at Rome. What cowards!"

"No, my lord; in coming through the Pontine Marshes I fell asleep and dreamt that I was attacked by the brigands, when it was only that person, who is my *dam de company*, that was trying to awake me; so I laid about me in good earnest, half asleep and half awake, and she bears the marks. But it was her own fault. What business had she to let me fall asleep, when I ordered her to keep me awake?"

Lord Fitzwarren, greatly amused, endeavoured in vain to restrain his laughter; but his efforts were unsuccessful, and he laughed until the tears rolled down his cheeks, while Lord Alexander Beaulieu evinced sundry symptoms of annoyance and dissatisfaction.

"Ah! that's something like a laugh," observed

Mrs. Maclaurin. "It does one good to hear it. And I could now laugh myself when I think of my beating Mrs. Bernard, taking her all the while for one of them brigands of whom I heard so much. But I was too angry at the time to laugh, for it was shameful of her to let me sleep, when it is so dangerous in them Pontiny Mashes."

"How long have you been here, Fitzwarren?" asked Lord Alexander Beaulieu, anxious to change the subject; "and what has become of Webworth?"

"I have been here three days, and Webworth is in his bed, devilishly ill with a bilious fever, in consequence of his *gourmandise*. Until I travelled with him, I had no idea what a glutton he is; and when he has deranged his stomach by over-eating, his temper becomes unbearable."

"Poor gentleman!" said Mrs. Maclaurin, with a look of deep sympathy. "You should advise him to take a couple of digestive pills with his soup. Nothing relieves the stomach so much, and after taking them one may safely indulge one's appetite. It's a horrid bore to sit down to a good dinner, and not be able to enjoy it. But, talking of eating, I wonder they don't send up coffee and tea. I feel very peckish, and hope they have some hot cakes, muffins, and crumpets. Ring the bell, Mrs. Bernard."

"Pray, allow me," said Lord Fitzwarren, rising

from his chair, and ringing the bell before Mrs. Bernard could reach it.

"Oh! my lord, I'm quite shocked you should have the trouble. I only keep that person," and Mrs. Maclaurin glanced carelessly at her unfortunate *dame de compagnie*, "to ring the bell, write my notes, and read the newspapers for me."

The obtuse but good-natured Fitzwarren was shocked at this unfeeling speech, and looked with pity on Mrs. Bernard, who changed colour, and evinced by her quivering lip and moistened eye that she felt ashamed at being thus treated before a stranger.

The waiter now appeared, and Mrs. Maclaurin turned to Mrs. Bernard, and desired her to command the coffee and tea; but, above all things, the hot cakes.

The waiter expressed his regret that the hot cakes could not be procured. The *courrier* had ordered them, but unfortunately there was not any person in the house who understood making them.

"What does he say?" demanded Mrs. Maclaurin.

The *dame de compagnie* explained.

"He doesn't mean to say that in a house like this I can't have a muffin, or crumpet, or a Sally Lunn?" and the face of the *gourmande* became crimson with anger. "Was there ever such a thing? Ring for Bordini: I must hear what he says."

The lady now betrayed such unequivocal symptoms of anger and disappointment, that Lord Fitzwarren looked from her to his friend in mute astonishment; and Lord Alexander Beaulieu, dreading a scene in the presence of Fitzwarren, became every moment more embarrassed.

The *courrier* now arrived; and Mrs. Maclaurin dictated to her *dame de compagnie* a torrent of reproaches for his not having had the cakes ready, the names and ingredients of which were to be translated into Italian by her.

"Don't mince matters with him, I desire you. Tell him I think him a most stupid and negligent person, thus to disappoint me."

Mrs. Bernard commenced the reproof, greatly modifying the terms of it; but before she had half got through her phrase, Mrs. Maclaurin, slapping the table with her hands, until every thing on it was shaken, exclaimed—

"Speak out, woman, as if you were in earnest, and don't go on as if you were calmly talking to a lord or a lady."

Bordini shrugged his shoulders, gesticulated as every Italian does when he wants to explain, declared that he had not only tried every person in the hotel, in order to procure the cakes desired by *sua excellenza*, but searched the whole town in vain, and lamented

that *sua excellenza* was angry for what was no fault of his.

This speech was translated for the lady, but it by no means molified her; nor, when no less than half a dozen different kinds of Neapolitan cakes were served, all of which she partook of, did her temper seem restored. She said it was impossible to live in a place where neither muffins, crumpets, nor Sally Lunns could be procured, and turning to her future husband, she expressed her determination to leave Naples as soon as ever they were married.

"Whew!" said, or rather whistled, Lord Fitzwarren. "So then, Axy, you, like me, are come to Naples to be spliced, and to this lady?"

Lord Alexander Beaulieu, with a rueful countenance, nodded assent, while the bride elect, assuming a bashful air, affected to cast her eyes down and play with her rings.

"Poor devil!" thought Fitzwarren; "and has it come to this with him? Marry a Gorgon like the one before me? Why, by Jove, if she had the wealth of the Indies, she would be a dear bargain, and with such an infernal temper, too! I suppose poor Axy is driven to it by poverty. Nothing else could make him. If a few hundreds can keep him out of the scrape, I will most readily bestow them on him."

Lord Fitzwarren now rose to depart, and asked his

friend to accompany him to his room. "And so, Axy," said he, when he found himself alone with Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "you are going to marry Mrs. — what d'ye call her; I forget her name!"

"Yes, Fitz; such is the case."

"I am a plain-spoken fellow, Axy, and I have known you long enough to say what I think without giving any offence, I hope."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu bowed assent.

"Well, then, I can't fancy that it's for love that you are about to wed; *that*, I think, is out of the question in this case; but if you are going to marry because you are hard up, as many a man before you has been, why all I can say is, that if a few hundreds can keep you from such a wife, they are heartily at your service."

"Thanks, my good fellow. The lady, I am ready to admit, *entre nous*, is not tempting; but she is rich as Crœsus, and therefore I have made up my mind to the thing. Her fortune will console me for the incumbrance attached to it, and I intend to see as little as possible of her when she becomes Lady Alexander Beaulieu. Had my brother behaved more liberally, and given me a decent allowance, I might have been spared from such a *mésalliance;* and he, who has such a lot of ready money, and never spends one-half his income, might easily do so if he liked. He won't

much relish the sister-in-law I am about to give him, for he's as proud as Lucifer. But he may blame himself."

"But consider, Axy, if anything were to happen to your brother, what a horrid bore it would be for you to find yourself saddled with such a wife, when you no longer had any occasion for her money!"

"I have considered all that, Fitzy, but be assured I have no chance of ever coming to my brother's fortune. Mountserrat is as sober as a judge, as abstemious as an anchorite, and as careful of his health as an unbeliever in the skill of physicians can be. Then he never hunts, or rides restive horses; and, in fact, he takes such especial care of his person, that I shall live and die a younger brother, so I have determined on sacrificing at the shrine of Plutus, and marrying the rich widow."

"I am sorry for it, for be assured the lady in question has a terrible temper of her own, and that, joined to her other defects, must, in spite of her money, render your life anything rather than comfortable. However, you are the best judge of your own affairs, my dear fellow; and as you have made up your mind, it's no use talking about it. When are you to be married?"

"As soon as I can make the necessary arrangements, which, I suppose, can be done in two or three

days. You, also, I have heard, are to be wedded here?"

"Yes; I expect the Wellerbys here in the course of a week. I wish I could be decently off, to tell you the truth, Axy, for I am no more in love with Livy than you are; but the poor soul is so devilishly fond of me that I can't find it in my heart to throw her over, even if I could do so without laying myself open to the charge of dishonourable conduct towards her; so I'm fairly in for it, and must make the best of it I can."

"Lady Olivia has a temper of her own, I can tell you, Fitz; so take care you do not find yourself henpecked for the rest of your days."

"You are wrong, Axy; Livy is as mild as mother's milk, never differs in opinion with me on any subject, and lets me take my own way in everything. Why, I tried to get up a quarrel with her half a dozen times, just to have a decent excuse for crying off or to provoke her to do so; but, Lord bless you! it was all in vain. The poor girl is so in love with me, that if I said black was white, she'd agree to it. Then she dotes on horses. You should see her when I speak of poor Fanny; the tears come to her eyes, and she says 'Ah! how I should have liked that dear animal!' No; I have broken Livy in, I can tell you, and shall always have my own way after

marriage, as I have had it before. I wish *you* had as good a chance of being comfortable, Axy."

"Thanks for your good wishes, Fitz. Of one thing be assured, and that is, that if the widow had the temper of a fiend, it should not interfere with my comfort. I intend to see as little of her as it is possible to do, and she must console herself for my absence with the rank which her marriage with me will confer on her, while I must submit as patiently as I can to the ridicule which she cannot fail to draw on my name."

The friends parted for the night, promising to see each other the next morning, each smiling at the weakness of the other.

"Well, I must say," thought Lord Fitzwarren, "that Axy has made what I call a very bad bargain. That Gorgon is not presentable, and will expose him wherever he goes. I didn't think he was so foolish as to marry such a creature. Why, as presumptive heir to a marquisate and a large estate, he might have wedded some rich citizen's daughter in London with lots of money, and without the ugliness or vulgarity of this widow."

"Poor Fitz!" thought Lord Alexander Beaulieu, "to be taken in by that plain and artful coquette, Lady Olivia Wellerby! What an ass he must be! She hasn't a *sous*, and has a very bad temper. It's a

regular take-in, and *he* is too great a blockhead to get out of the scrape. Well, *I have* been wiser, for I shall at least secure a large fortune, and that, as times go, will be a consolation for any *désagrémens* attached to my marriage. I see beforehand that I must cut and run as soon after I touch the money as I can, for she is such an incorrigible *bête*, that there is no keeping her quiet, even before a stranger, for a single hour. How Fitz will show her up to every one he meets! Well, it can't be helped."

CHAPTER XXXV.

They little know of love who idly deem
It vanquished when pale jealousy doth vex,
And indignation, with stern mien, doth seem
To look disdain, and angry thoughts perplex
The heart, where erst the treach'rous god did reign
Ere it had learnt to know the doubts and fears
That fade the cheek, and fill the heart with pain,
And steep the sleepless pillow with sad tears—
For still, e'en still, the tyrant wields his power,
His slave to wound through many a distant hour.

Mrs. Sydney and her daughter's journey to Milan was a melancholy one. Neither could forget the shock given to their feelings by beholding Strathern as they did, at such an undue hour, and bearing in his dress and countenance the undeniable evidence of having been absent from his home all night. His haggard face, dishevelled hair, and wild look impressed both ladies with the belief that he had just left some dissolute companions ; and, as this conviction entered their minds, they felt indignant against him, and, ashamed of their own imagined credulity, in having believed that one who was now so fallen could

ever have been the high principled and honourable man they had taken him for.

Whether it was a latent, lingering sentiment of affection that still operated on the heart of Louisa Sydney, or her pride that revolted at the idea that other eyes than her own should see her lover, as she last beheld him, who shall decide?—but certain it is that she would have given much to have prevented her mother from witnessing his degradation; and so instantaneously had this desire flashed through her mind, that even at the moment that she started and averted her eyes from him in the street, she checked the exclamation of surprise and chagrin that rose to her lips, lest it should reveal the cause of her emotion to her mother, and assumed as composed an aspect as she could. Her precaution was, however, unavailing; Mrs. Sydney had seen Strathern even before her daughter had caught sight of him, and the flush of indignation that overspread her face, and her suppressed breathing, revealed to her daughter, quite as strongly as words could have done, her anger and disgust.

There is, perhaps, no sentiment more painful to a refined and generous person than that of finding one previously loved and respected, worthless and debased. This unenviable feeling now haunted both mother and daughter. A perfect sympathy existed in their hearts, yet both shrank from giving utterance to its dictates,

from a consciousness that it would only tend to embitter the regrets of both.

Louisa Sydney was grateful to her parent for this delicate forbearance, and, actuated no less by gratitude than pride, endeavoured to appear calm, while her heart was tortured. What efforts are women—so often, but falsely termed weak—frequently called upon to make: and at moments, too, when their breasts are wrung by the severest trials! To enable them to fulfil their destinies, Providence has endued them with pride and delicacy, two qualities that have peculiar influence in feminine natures; and these, in woman's breast, act as courage does in man's. But who, save one of their own sex, can know how much the exercise of these resources costs them? The pallid cheek, the quickened pulse, the tearful eye—symptomatic of a wounded heart—are carefully concealed, before the world, beneath the mask of assumed calmness, and only in solitude are the feelings permitted to seek the relief of tears.

How often are those who in public conceal mental anguish with a firmness worthy of a Spartan, accused of being unfeeling, by persons who, could they but behold them in the privacy of their chambers, when the garish world is shut out, would own that women, with all the weakness attributed to them, must have a rare power of endurance, thus, through so many

hours, to appear calm! Louisa Sydney possessed this power, and, while in the presence of her mother, her composure might have imposed on a less deeply-interested companion; but Mrs. Sydney saw through the veil beneath which her beloved child endeavoured to shroud her sufferings, and almost loathed him who had occasioned them. The thoughts of both were continually occupied by one subject, but that was a prohibited one between them, and their efforts to maintain a desultory conversation were as painful as they were unsuccessful.

How long and weary does a journey seem undertaken under such circumstances! Scenery that, had their minds not been engrossed by bitter reflections and gloomy anticipations, might have charmed them, was now unheeded. They longed to arrive at their journey's end, though its termination held out no prospect of brighter hours—in short, they wished to escape from themselves, forgetful of the truth of the beautiful lines of Horace—

> Patriæ quis exul
> Se quoque fugit?

They at length arrived at Milan, but the view of this fine and interesting city, with its magnificent Duomo, failed to banish the sadness that oppressed their spirits. And yet the sight of that beautiful edifice, with its snow-white pinnacles and statues,

seen against the bright azure of the unclouded skies, awoke a sentiment of admiration in the breasts of our gentle travellers. It was, however, but of brief duration, for soon came the reflection to Louisa, of how, a short time before, with him who could never more be aught to her, she would have enjoyed the contemplation of that glorious temple ; and she turned from it with saddened feelings.

Mrs. Sydney's enjoyment had for many years been only a reflected one from that of her daughter. If Louisa felt pleased and happy, *she* became so ; but when her daughter's brow was overcast, and a languid smile played but for a moment over her pale face, the fond mother's became shrouded in gloom, for she saw that the transient smile had only been assumed to disguise the all-absorbing grief that was preying on her heart.

To beguile the hours, and in the hope of averting Louisa's thoughts from the one painful subject that filled them, Mrs. Sydney made an excursion to Monza, where, among the objects that most struck her daughter and herself, was the iron crown that had encircled so many royal heads, and which the Emperor Napoleon had placed with his own hand on his brow.

To how many reflections on the instability of human greatness, and the nothingness of grandeur and power, would this diadem have given rise in a mind like that of Louisa Sydney, had it been free from the pressure of

personal cares that almost overwhelmed it? But now she turned with a listless air from its contemplation, and hardly bestowed a glance on the many sparkling jewels —the gifts of sovereigns to the church—as they were taken from their cases and exposed to her view. The palace of Monza, with its park and fine gardens, she walked pensively through, and her mother's melancholy became increased as she observed the abstraction and indifference with which her daughter viewed objects that would, previously to her late bitter disappointment of the heart, have afforded her the liveliest pleasure.

Their excursion to the Certosa, near Pavia, interested Louisa more. The splendour of this church, which owes its erection to John Galeas Visconti, Duke of Milan, dazzled if it could not delight her; but in her state of mind she was more prone to reflect on the feeling of penitence that led him to offer up this atonement to an offended deity, than on the various and beautiful details which render the edifice one of the most magnificent in the world in its decorations. She thought of the crimes into which a reckless ambition had plunged the proud duke; of an uncle imprisoned that he might seize his possessions; and of the son of that uncle poisoned, after he had treacherously got him into his power. Her memory reverted, too, to Catherine, the wife of Galeas Visconti, and the daughter and sister of the deposed

duke, and his poisoned son, who, it is said, urged her husband to erect this temple; and she was reminded that, like Mary of England, Catherine Visconti shared, without repugnance or shame, the dominions wrested from her own father by the very man she wedded.

For a brief space, Louisa Sydney forgot her own sorrow in dwelling on the persons and incidents connected with the Certosa; and when, having viewed the treasures it contains, in the rarest works of art in painting and sculpture, and the finest marbles, oriental alabaster, gold, silver, ivory, pietro duro, and bronze, she remembered that Francis I. of France, when taken prisoner at the battle of Pavia, which was fought in the park near the church, requested permission to offer up his prayers in this glorious temple, while yet suffering under the unaccustomed mortification of defeat; she felt that such an example of Christian resignation ought not to be given in vain, and mentally made a vow that *she*, *too*, would henceforth struggle to bear up against the sadness that was preying on her heart, and, like the defeated monarch, pray for strength to bear her trials. She beheld with interest the deserted dwellings of the monks, situated behind the cloisters, and which, by their extreme simplicity, afford a remarkable contrast to the richly decorated church. They are twenty-four in number, and stand apart. Each contains two small rooms,

with a little garden in front, in which is a fountain and a marble bench, and, though now presenting only a tangled maze of flowers and weeds that in wild luxuriance overspread the ground, leaving no trace of the stiff and formal parterres in which they were once laid out, the vivid green and bright tints of the flowers, and the carols of the birds that have taken possession of them, render these little abodes very tempting to those who, smarting under the disappointments from which few, even of the most fortunate, are exempt, feel a longing desire to steal from the busy world to such secluded spots, there to enjoy quiet, if happiness be denied.

Similar thoughts passed through the minds of mother and daughter, for the trials to which Louisa Sydney had lately been exposed, while wounding her heart, had matured her reason. The world for her had now lost some of its fairest illusions, and she could better comprehend the sorrows her parent had experienced, and more truly sympathise with them, than before she herself had become acquainted with disappointment. Returning to Milan from the Certosa, she once more opened her heart to her mother, spoke of the pain she had endured from the conviction of the unworthiness of him on whom she had bestowed it, and the affectionate gentleness with which she was listened to, and soothed by her fond parent.

operated like a healing balm applied to a wound. Clasped in the arms of Mrs. Sydney, her head reposing on the maternal breast, where it had been so often pillowed in infancy, and her ear drinking in the sweet accents addressed to her by one who had been indeed a stricken deer, Louisa felt a calmness steal over her mind, to which, ever since the morning of her departure from Rome, she had been a stranger. Mrs. Sydney did not, as some persons would have done, attempt to reason her daughter out of the passion to which her youthful heart had so wholly surrendered itself. Nor did she speak of the certain influence of time in eradicating misplaced affection, although she hoped much from its salutary power. Such a mode of reasoning she well knew only served to irritate the pain it was meant to subdue; so she tried to comfort her child by sharing, if she could not banish, her regrets; and this system, prompted by her gentle nature, was the most efficacious she could have adopted towards Louisa.

"You saw him, mother, that fatal morning, as we were leaving Rome," said she.

"Yes, dearest, I did."

"How kind, how considerate it was of you not to speak of it! I was then—and indeed ever since until now—too weak, too irritable, to have borne conversing on it. You received his presence at that hour, and,

coupled with his dress and whole appearance, as I did—as an irrefragable proof that he had indeed sunk into shameless habits of profligacy? O mother! how it wounds the heart to think that while I, on a sleepless pillow, was shedding the bitter tears that cannot be controlled when the unworthiness of one beloved is discovered, *he*, forgetful of his vows, of my feelings, and of common decency, was passing the hours with that beautiful but degraded being, with whom we beheld him that never-to-be-forgotten night, at the Coliseum, and with whom he afterwards, as if in derision of us, appeared publicly at St. Peter's."

"I have reflected often and deeply on all this, my own Louisa, but I confess that, notwithstanding appearances are so strongly against him, I cannot reconcile them with all that I saw, and I was a close observer of his character and conduct during the months in which he passed so many hours with us. His character in England, too, which, even in the eyes of the cynical Mr. Rhymer, was spotless, accords so little with his either renewing an old, or contracting a new acquaintance with any woman of light conduct, that, in spite of appearances, I cannot divest myself of the notion that he is not the culpable person we suppose him to be."

"But how explain away what we saw, and what others also beheld? We cannot surely doubt the evi-

dence of Mr. Rhymer, any more than that of our own eyes?" said Louisa, becoming animated in her indignation against him, whom she, in her secret heart, would have given millions, had they been hers, to have heard justified.

"Alas! I cannot explain them away," replied Mrs. Sydney. "They are involved in a mystery which I confess I cannot fathom; but though it may be a weakness, and perhaps a reprehensible one, I own that it is soothing to me to dwell on all the good I saw in his nature and character, and to believe that, notwithstanding the appearances which bear so strongly against him, he could not suddenly descend to be so unworthy as these same appearances would imply. I could no longer have faith in the existence of goodness, were I to believe that he was enacting a part during all the months that he passed in our society. The descent from honourable principles and irreproachable conduct is rarely, if ever, so rapid as his late behaviour would lead one to suppose. He was neither a man of quick impulse, nor of a changeable nature; so, as I cannot at all reconcile his recent acts with his past consistency of conduct, I am willing, for my own peace, as well as for his sake, to give him all the benefit of my most charitable interpretations of that which is, to say the least of it, very suspicious, and to think of him as I knew him, rather than as he has latterly appeared."

"Ah! when, dearest mother, shall I be as considerate, as reasonable, and as charitable as you are?" exclaimed Louisa, pressing her mother's hand to her lips, and secretly pleased that Strathern had still an advocate in her breast. Yet she would not avow, even to herself, that she had a satisfaction in hearing him spoken well of. The heart has its mysteries, which not even its owner can solve, and this was one of them; and, perhaps Louisa Sydney was as unconscious as her mother, why, from this evening, she might date her feelings to be of a less gloomy nature, and her indignation towards Strathern to have become softened.

Many had been the attempts made by Nurse Murray to lead her youthful mistress once more to permit the same confidential conversation with her that had formerly existed. Many were the innuendoes given of the wickedness of men in general, in the hope of their affording an opening to dwell on the superlative degree of it in one of the sex in particular, of whom she entertained the very worst opinion.

"Sure it would relieve her heart were she to open it to me," would the old woman say to herself, when she observed the gloom and sadness of her young lady. "Don't I remember how it used to do me good, many a long year ago, when I had a quarrel with my poor husband, to open my heart to any friend. And to whom could my darling young mis-

tress tell what is troubling her, who would feel it so deeply as I should? Ah! woe's me! she no longer loves or trusts me as she once did, and I do believe she has never forgiven me for having cautioned her against that artful wicked man; although she herself must have discovered something very bad of him indeed, to make her and her mother leave Rome all of a sudden as they did, and refuse to see him the day before they left it. And didn't Thomas, the footman, tell me that, the very morning we were leaving Rome, he saw Mr. Strathern walking towards his lodgings in the very same clothes he had seen him wear the day before, when he called at our house, and that he looked pale and haggard, as if he hadn't been in bed all night? 'You may be sure, Mrs. Murray, he was about no good,' said Thomas. 'He was gambling, or drinking all night, and when he saw our carriages drive past him, he looked as if struck all of a heap, and then began running as fast as he could after us, as if to stop us. He staggered, too, when he was running, so I am sure he must have been tipsy. The gentry blame poor servants, Mrs. Murray,' says Thomas to me, 'for taking a drop too much, but they themselves don't mind turning night into day, and drinking bottle after bottle. It's easy to be seen there's one law for the masters, and another for servants.' Well, I'm glad the marriage was broken off,

for what a terrible thing it would be, to be sure, to have my sweet young lady married to a gambler, or a drunkard, and have the houses turned topsy-turvy! But who'd have thought that one who appeared so steady and genteel could be addicted to drinking? Well, I dare say, this was what Mrs. Bloxham meant when she shook her head so gravely, and said she knew what she knew. Yes, this must be it. But how mighty confidential my young lady and her mother are grown all of a sudden! Never asunder, except when they are in bed; always such good friends, and never the least miff or coolness between them. Not but what, I must own, if ever there was, it was always on my young mistress's side, for I never saw such a doting mother in my life; but it was a pleasure, ay, and a pride too, for me to see that Miss Sydney had more confidence in me than in her own mother, and so she once had, but woe's me, that's now all over; and if I begin to speak about the wickedness of mankind, she stops me short, and changes the subject, so I don't know how ever to get her to have the same trust in me she had before. God forgive me if it's a sin! but it *does* vex me to the heart to see all her love and liking turn on her mother, and so changed as she is to me."

Such were the cogitations in which old Nurse Murray indulged many a time and oft, when her young lady had hastily got through the duties of her

toilette, and dismissed her from attendance. Her pride and affection both wounded, she envied Mrs. Sydney for thus engrossing all her daughter's time and attention; and although invariably treated with kindness by her youthful mistress, it no longer satisfied her, after having previously been permitted to take liberties, which Miss Sydney, having seen the impropriety of, was determined no more to allow. How little did either mother or daughter suspect what was passing in their old servant's mind! And yet Murray's was not naturally a bad heart. She had only been spoilt by too much indulgence, and the result was, that she was jealous of the affection and good understanding established between Mrs. Sydney and her daughter as she had formerly been of the attachment between her young lady and Strathern.

Having seen all that was most interesting in Milan and its vicinity, Mrs. Sydney and Louisa set out for the Lake of Como, where they determined to pass some months. The beauty of the scenery, and the tranquillity and repose of that enchanting spot, delighted them both. They would spend many hours every day on the water, and Mrs. Sydney having observed its efficacious effect on the health of her beloved child, often permitted her, accompanied by her female attendant, to indulge the pleasure of boating, when her own avocations or wishes detained her at home.

The boat they had engaged for their sojourn at Como was moored on the lake at the bottom of the garden of their villa, from the windows of which she could behold Louisa gliding over the smooth and limpid water, which, like a vast mirror, reflected on its calm bosom the blue and cloudless skies above it. The fond mother observed with pleasure that this amusement invigorated without fatiguing her daughter, hence she never opposed her wishes to enjoy it, when the fineness of the weather enabled the boatmen to give her the assurance that none of those sudden storms, so prevalent at Como, were to be dreaded. Reclining beneath the awning, which screened her from the too fervid rays of the sun, and with a favourite volume of poems in her hand, Louisa passed whole hours on the lake. Oftentimes would she close the book, and, looking on the Elysium that surrounded her, her thoughts would fly to *him*, from whom they were seldom long absent, verifying the truth of the poet's line, that when endeavouring *not* to think of him, he was never forgotten. "How *he* would have admired this beautiful place," would she say to herself, "and with *him* what a paradise should I think it!" And then she would sigh, and blame herself for thus allowing him so continually to occupy her thoughts. "Yet," would she say, "I do but as my dear good mother does; I think of him only as he was, or at

least as I believed him to be, when I yielded him my whole heart, and thought our destinies were indissolubly united. This is not, I hope, a crime ; for, while I turn with abhorrence from the sensualist and libertine I have, alas ! lately had but too much reason to consider him to be, I have a pleasure, a melancholy one though it be, in remembering what I believed him."

One day, when the rays of the sun were more than usually felt on the water, and not a breath of air agitated its glassy surface, Louisa, oppressed by the heat, desired the boatmen to leave the centre of the lake, and to row the boat under the shade of some magnificent willows that stretched their giant limbs and verdant foliage far over the waters, from a pleasure-ground where she had often previously sought a refuge from the sunbeams. She was perusing the book with her when the tones of a well-known voice reached her ear. She started, turned her head in the direction whence the voice came, and beheld emerging from the thicket of flowering shrubs that had hitherto concealed them, Strathern and the lady with whom she had seen him on the never-to-be-forgotten night at the Coliseum, advancing towards the spot near to which her boat rested. Trembling with emotion, she ordered the boatmen instantly to leave the place. They, believing that they were acting in compliance with her wishes, were impelling it towards the direction in

which those she so much wished to avoid had paused to admire the view.

"No—not there—not there!" cried Miss Sydney; "go back as swiftly as you can."

The boatmen began to explain something about the unsafety of rowing in the direction to which she pointed, but she would not hear their reasons, and, again commanding them to proceed in a contrary direction, they unwillingly obeyed her. The boat had not advanced far from the shore when it struck on a concealed rock, and with such force that it was thrown on its side, and all in it were precipitated into the water. Louisa Sydney rose to the surface for a moment, but only to be engulphed again. One of the boatmen seized her female attendant, believing that it was the young lady he was rescuing, and holding her with one hand endeavoured to make for the shore, while the other, thinking only of his own safety, kept aloof, and swam to the nearest point of land. Once more, half suffocated, and nearly unconscious, Louisa was borne to the surface of the water, and was then sinking, never more to see the light, when she was grasped by a vigorous hand, and felt herself clasped round the waist and drawn to the shore. Breathless and exhausted from the violence of his exertions, her rescuer from death sunk nearly as lifeless as his precious burthen when he had placed her on land. The female

attendant, who had now recovered from her immersion in the water, having been more quickly snatched from it than Miss Sydney, assisted to restore that young lady to life, and Lady Delmington, who had witnessed the whole event, most actively aided her.

Strathern — for it was no other, who had saved Louisa's life at the risk of his own — now arose from the earth, on which, faint and exhausted, he had fallen, when he placed her on a bank, and with intense anxiety bent over her. He had beheld the accident, ignorant that the object still dearest to him on earth was the person whose danger he witnessed ; but, urged by humanity, he threw off his coat, and, plunging into the water, swam to the rescue of the being whose white drapery still floated on the water. It was only when he now looked on her, to all appearance lifeless, that he recognised the person he had saved ; for, her bonnet having fallen off when he grasped her, her long tresses, loosened from the comb that confined them, had concealed her face. The late inexplicable and unkind conduct of Miss Sydney, with all the chagrin it had occasioned him, was in a moment forgotten. He remembered only that the woman he adored was cold and inanimate before him ; that life, if not quite extinct, fluttered so feebly at her heart that it might soon cease to beat altogether ; and, almost frantic with alarm, he knelt on the ground by her side, and chafed

her feet and hands to restore warmth, while Lady Delmington applied her *flaçon* of salts to her nostrils, and the French attendant wrung the water from her long and silken tresses.

At length Louisa languidly opened her eyes, and the first object they rested upon was Strathern. A slight colour tinged her cheeks, and a faint smile parted her pale lips. Strathern pressed one of the small hands he was chafing to his lips, and tears of joy and thankfulness filled his eyes at her being restored to life. Yes, that manly nature that had but a few minutes before prompted him to brave death, to rescue a fellow-creature, was now subdued into all a woman's tenderness, and the tears flowed down his face. Again Louisa opened her eyes ; and this proof of his affection so touched her, that her lids closed ; but, before they did so, Strathern discovered a look of softness and pity that thrilled his heart. Lady Delmington, the only person present who possessed any calmness, had despatched one of the boatmen to the inn for a carriage and restoratives. Both now arrived, and, some *sal volatile* having been administered to Louisa, she was able to move her head and limbs, and to speak.

"It is to you I owe my life, is it not?" said she to Strathern.

"Heaven be praised I was near to save you!" replied he.

A smile, such as angels might be supposed to give, played around her mouth, and her eyes expressed the thanks her lips attempted not to utter. She raised one hand to her brow, Strathern still detaining the other in his, as if to collect her thoughts, but made no effort to withdraw the hand he held; and he, filled with anxiety lest she should again renounce him, accepted this tacit permission to retain her hand as a favourable omen.

Again Lady Delmington held the *flaçon* of salts to her nostrils, and, as if aroused from a reverie by their pungency, Louisa Sydney opened her eyes, and turning them on the beautiful woman who was, with the gentlest care, attending on her, shrank back as if a serpent had stung her, and, rapidly withdrawing her hand from Strathern, called her attendant, and desired to be taken to her home. When Strathern attempted to raise her in his arms, she tried to extricate herself; and he felt with dismay, while he bore her to the carriage in waiting, that she recoiled from his touch, and that even when he placed her in it she averted her eyes, while coldly expressing a few words of regret at having given him so much trouble. Of the services of Lady Delmington she made no acknowledgment; and, her attendant having taken her seat by her side, she peremptorily refused to allow Strathern to walk by the side of the carriage, to see her home, and parted from

him with as formal a bow of the head as if they were total strangers; while he, shocked and grieved at what he imagined to be her heartless conduct, felt stung to the quick.

A thousand conflicting emotions agitated the heart of Louisa Sydney as the carriage drove to the villa of her mother. Had she been snatched from a watery grave, and by *him*, too, only to find him still devoted to that lovely but guilty being, whose touch she had shrunk from as pollution! And *he*, hardened in sin, and lost to all shame, had permitted his mistress to approach her, to touch her person, which ought to have been sacred in his eyes! O, monstrous! He had presumed, too, to press her hand to his lips in the presence of that worthless woman; and *she*, weak and fond, had not withdrawn her hand from his, until she saw the beautiful but hateful face of her who had caused all the misery she had endured! She felt herself insulted, degraded. Better had it been that she had never been rescued from the watery grave into which she was sinking, than to owe her life to him, and to come in contact with his paramour.

Such were the bitter thoughts that filled the mind of Louisa Sydney, instead of gratitude to the Almighty for her preservation; but the pangs of love and jealousy had, for the time, conquered her better nature.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The noblest minds, whate'er men say,
Will most profoundly feel love's sway,
While those with levity imbued,
Engross'd by self, ne'er let intrude
An image in the heartless breast,
That might disturb its peaceful rest.
Love, entered once in noble hearts,
Will stay, though youth, sweet youth, departs;
And when with age it fades away,
How slow and gentle its decay!
Replaced by friendship fond and true,
Hearts b'lieve it still the love they knew.

When Strathern had in some degree recovered from the first shock of beholding the unlooked-for departure of Mrs. Sydney and his affianced wife from Rome, and had ascertained that not a line of explanation, not a word of adieu, had been left for him by them, he determined on seeking a relief from his cares in devoting his time to his poor friend, Lord Delmington. Gladly

would he have remained in the privacy of his own chamber, to indulge the reflections that oppressed his mind in the painful position in which he found himself, had not a sense of duty towards the suffering husband, and of pity towards the youthful and interesting wife, induced him to stifle his own sorrow, and to try to be of use to them.

He retraced his steps to their hotel, where he had the satisfaction of finding Lord Delmington better; and, after much persuasion, he engaged Lady Delmington to seek the repose of which she stood in so much need, promising that he would not leave his friend until she came to take his place by the sick couch. Here he had full time to think over the events of the last few days, but was furnished with no clue to unravel the mystery in which the cause of the conduct of Mrs. and Miss Sydney was involved.

In the darkened room, where no sound, save the breathings of his poor friend, and the quick throbbings of his own agitated heart, broke the silence that reigned, he passed the long hours. More than once during that day did a groan burst from Strathern, as the memory of happiness so lately enjoyed presented itself to his mind, contrasted with his present wretchedness and despair, and he only became sensible of having allowed this demonstration of his feelings to escape, when Lord Delmington, opening his languid eyes, looked at him

with an expression of the deepest gratitude for what he believed to originate in Strathern's anxiety for him, or extended his hand to press that of his friend, in recognition of his watchful care. Little did the invalid imagine the grief that was preying on the heart of him who sat beside his couch, or that *he* was the innocent cause of the circumstances that led to it. Often did the anonymous letter, warning him of the caprice and suspicious disposition of Louisa Sydney, which he had received some weeks before, recur to his memory during that day. Had not the charges contained in it —charges which he had then perused with disdain at their supposed falsehood—been by her recent conduct fully justified? With this painful conviction forced upon him, why could he not tear her image from his breast? why not banish her from his thoughts? were questions that often suggested themselves to his mind during the weary hours of that interminable day. How frequently have similar ones occurred to the thoughts of lovers when writhing under the first sharp pangs of disappointed affection; and the resolution to do so, like that vainly formed by Strathern, has been found to be more easily determined on than executed, as aching hearts have owned, for truly has the poet said, that lovers can "do all things but forget."

That day was the most wretched that Strathern had ever passed; and it was only when Lady Delmington

returned to take his place by the bedside of her husband, refreshed and invigorated by the hours of repose she had enjoyed, that a gleam of something like satisfaction cheered his heart at having enabled her to seek this blessing. When he observed the smile of ineffable affection with which the youthful wife was welcomed by her husband, as her hand was pressed to his feverish lips, he rejoiced that he had been there to relieve her for some hours from her charge; and, when the doctor came in, and pronounced Lord Delmington to be much better, his friend felt repaid for the sacrifice of his own cares which he had made in devoting himself to watching by his sick couch.

Day after day did Strathern continue his attention to Lord Delmington, whose convalescence, though slow, continued gradually to progress, until he was at length enabled to leave his chamber and be taken into the air. Strathern's interest in the youthful couple increased as he daily witnessed their devoted attachment to each other, and their gratitude to him for his friendship. The physicians recommended that the invalid should leave Rome, and, instead of proceeding at once to Naples, as had been his original intention, go towards the north of Italy, where the greater coolness of the temperature would be more conducive to the restoration of his health.

When Strathern proposed leaving them, both Lord and Lady Delmington so earnestly pressed him to

accompany them to the Lake of Como, whither they intended directing their route, that he, having now no motive for his movements, yielded an assent to their entreaties, and set out from Rome with them, a medical man having been added to their party, to be in readiness lest any relapse might ensue to Lord Delmington. They had only arrived at Como the evening previous to the encounter which had so nearly proved fatal to Louisa Sydney; and having, at Lord Delmington's request, walked out, that his wife might enjoy the fresh air, and view a villa to be let on the borders of the lake, Strathern and his fair companion were exploring its pleasure-ground when Louisa had recognised his voice, and, in her desire to avoid him, had insisted on the boatmen rowing in the direction where a rock occasioned the accident described in the last chapter.

Had Strathern believed himself cured of the wound that still rankled in his heart, the interview with Louisa would have proved the fallacy of his supposition. But he indulged in no such illusion. He was well aware that his attachment, however mortified his feelings had been, and still were, by the unaccountable conduct of the object of his affection, and her mother, had known no diminution; and when he viewed Louisa to all appearance lifeless, he felt that if she did not recover, existence would henceforth be insupportable to him. Her faint smile on recognising him, her per-

mitting him to retain her hand in his after she had the power of withdrawing it, had transported him with joy, by proving that, whatever might have been the cause that had induced her to desert him, it was not personal dislike. How then account for the sudden change in her manner? Was it, that she was only kind while yet her reason had hardly regained sufficient power to govern her actions, and that with returning consciousness came the determination to hold no intercourse with him? Wounded as he was, when he reflected on all this, as he beheld the carriage in which he had placed her drive from his view, she having insisted that he should not walk by its side, as he had proposed, he nevertheless did not, could not, feel as wretched as, previously to this unlooked-for meeting, he had done, for he no longer believed himself disliked or forgotten; and with this consolation a thousand vague hopes sprang up in his heart, justifying the poet who has said that

"Love will hope where reason would despair."

As he stood with folded arms, gazing at the carriage that contained Louisa Sydney, wholly forgetful that his clothes were dripping wet, and of the presence of Lady Delmington, that lady, with the prescience in affairs of the heart said to be a peculiar attribute of

her sex of every age, immediately surmised the state of his.

"Come, Mr. Strathern, you must not expose yourself to cold," said she. "Let us return at once to the hotel, that you may change your dress."

Strathern started, as if from a reverie, and was about to offer his dripping arm to his fair companion, when, recollecting himself, he assented to her proposal, and they walked together towards the hotel.

"What a beautiful person!" observed Lady Delmington. "I never beheld any one so exquisitely handsome."

Strathern felt gratified, for nothing is more pleasing to men than to listen to the praises of the object of their passion from one of her own sex.

"You say nothing," resumed Lady Delmington, "but I am sure you must agree with me in opinion."

"She is beautiful, most beautiful," replied Strathern.

"I thought her angelic," said Lady Delmington, "when she first opened her eyes and smiled, but....."

And here the speaker paused, for she did not wish to finish the phrase that rose to her lips, which would have implied her notice of the stern and cold aspect and manner subsequently assumed by the young lady in question. Strathern was sensible of the meaning of the break in her sentence, and thankful for it, too;

for, however angry at the marked change in Louisa Sydney's manner, he could ill bear hearing it commented on by another; though he was more annoyed at the want of common civility, not to say gratitude, evinced by Louisa to Lady Delmington, who had lavished such kindness and attention on her during her insensibility, and after it, than at the treatment he had experienced himself. His fair companion and he walked on for some time in silence, Lady Delmington not wishing to interrupt the train of thought passing in his mind, and he so totally abstracted as to be hardly conscious of her presence, when they met the physician who had been despatched by Lord Delmington, on hearing of the accident, to offer his services to the young lady rescued from a watery grave. The boatman sent for a carriage had told all whom he had encountered of the accident that had occurred, and a servant having incautiously repeated the news to Lord Delmington, he instantly became alarmed lest it might have been his wife who had ventured on the lake, and so narrowly escaped drowning. The servant, however, was able to remove his fears, as he had learnt that it was a young lady some time a resident at Como to whom the accident had occurred, and he instantly sent off Dr. Pitcairn, and a servant with a medicine-chest and various restoratives, to administer succour to the stranger. The doctor had missed the

road, and directed his steps to another villa, so that he arrived too late to be of any use to Miss Sydney.

"Bless my soul, my ledy!" said the Scotsman—"why, your ledyship is perfectly wet. This is very dangerous, and may occasion disagreeable results."

And now for the first time did Strathern observe that Lady Delmington's dress was nearly as wet as his own, in consequence of her close contact with the streaming drapery of Miss Sydney, whose dripping head reposed on her breast, while he and the female attendant were endeavouring to restore suspended animation by friction. A pang shot through his heart as he witnessed this proof of Lady Delmington's kindness, and recalled the total want of notice taken of it on the part of her on whom it had been lavished.

"Your ledyship must positively take a few drops of this cordial," said Dr. Pitcairn. "'Twill do you good, and prevent the cold from striking inwardly. I have known mony serious cases of catarrh and pulmonary attacks to have oreeginated in colds caught by damp clothes."

"I am not apprehensive of any disagreeable results, doctor, I assure you," replied Lady Delmington; "for I have walked, since I got wet, sufficiently quick to warm me. My only desire is to conceal from Lord Delmington that I have been at all wet,

for his fears would magnify the danger, and make him ill and nervous."

"Weel, weel—I'll try and smuggle your ledyship into the hotel by the back entrance, so that you can change your dress before his lordship sees you; but you must indeed obleege me by swallowing a few drops of this cordial. And Mr. Strathern must do the same."

"Would it not be advisable for the doctor to proceed to the young lady's residence, and offer her his services?" said Lady Delmington, ever thoughtful for others.

"Certainly," replied Strathern, who was himself on the point of suggesting the propriety of this step. "Do, dear doctor, go at once to Mrs. Sydney's villa, where your presence and skill may be of the greatest advantage," said Strathern.

"Weel, I'll just go; but I must recommend her ledyship to have recourse to a warm bath when she enters the hotel, and after that to get into a bed well warmed. It is absolutely necessary, I assure you; and I advise you, Mr. Strathern, to adopt the same precaution."

So saying, Dr. Pitcairn hurried off, attended by the servant with the medicine-chest, and restoratives, in the direction of Mrs. Sydney's villa, which had been pointed out to him by Strathern, who had noted the

route taken by the carriage that contained her lovely daughter. Catarrhs and pulmonary attacks, pronounced by Dr. Pitcairn to be the general consequences of wet clothes, haunted the mind of Strathern; but truth compels us to state that, however well disposed towards the fair and interesting lady who walked by his side, his fears all pointed to, and were engrossed by the possible danger of the object of his affection. So delicate as Louisa was, to what might not her immersion in the water, and her remaining so long in wet clothes, expose her?

Lady Delmington guessed that his thoughts were with the lovely girl he had so lately rescued from death, and her lively imagination had already composed a little romance, which was not far from the truth, in which they figured as lovers separated by the cruelty of a parent, or some other of the untoward incidents prevalent in novels, the recollection of which had caused the remarkable change of aspect and manner she had noticed in the young lady.

"Poor Mr. Strathern," thought she, "it is no wonder that he should be so low-spirited. Who could help loving one so beautiful as she is, yet I fear she is less amiable than lovely, for an amiable woman would have at least uttered a few words of thanks to me, or have acknowledged my presence by a bow; while *she* averted her eyes from me with a

disdainful expression, for which I can in no way account."

Lady Delmington and Strathern, in pursuance of the plan of Dr. Pitcairn, entered the hotel by the back entrance, and having as rapidly as possible changed their clothes, presented themselves before the anxious husband, and relieved his fears. Neither felt any evil consequences from their wet clothes, but Lady Delmington had to relate all the particulars of the accident in reply to the questions of her lord, as Strathern was too much engrossed by his own thoughts to enter into the particulars of it. Dr. Pitcairn soon after entered, and so contracted were his brows, and so solemn his aspect, that Strathern, on beholding him, concluded that Miss Sydney was in the utmost danger.

"Good God! Doctor," exclaimed he, "did you indeed find your fears verified? I see by your countenance that she is in danger."

"Weel, I maun say, I believe the young ledy *is* in danger."

"Oh! why, then, did you leave her?"

"For a very good reason, I was not allowed to see her. No sooner had I sent in my card, and said that I had been requested by Mr. Strathern to call and offer my services,—because you see, my lord, it would not be becoming that a man of my profession should

go, unsoleecited, to attend any patient, so I just thought it right to make use of Mr. Strathern's name, when, after waiting a conseederable time in a small room off the hall, an old woman, who I believe was a housekeeper, came and told me that Mrs. Sydney sent her compliments, and was obleeged for my attention, but begged to decline my services. I declare I never was so treated before, and Mrs. Sydney will probably repent it when too late, for where, at Como, can she find an English practitioner? and if she entrusts her daughter's life to one of those Italian quacks who call themselves doctors, I would not give a penny for the young ledy's life."

"Let us hope that your services were only declined because the young lady did not stand in need of them," said Lady Delmington, observing the alarm pictured in Strathern's face at the doctor's concluding phrase.

"Not stand in need of them, my ledy! Why, how could she escape the consequences resulting from being all but drowned? Recollect the quantity of water she must have swallowed, the sense of suffocation endured, the catarrhs, pulmonary attacks, and rheumatisms, to which such an appalling accident must have rendered her liable, and then, who can doubt how much she stands in need of good meedical advice and care! Believe me, my lady, they will re-

pent not having accepted my proffered services when it will be too late, but they will have no one to blame but themselves."

Strathern felt convinced that Dr. Pitcairn's attendance had been declined, owing to his having been sent by *him*; and this new proof of the pertinacity with which Mrs. and Miss Sydney adhered to their resolution of not only avoiding him, but refusing to profit by the opinion of an English physician in a case requiring it so much, because recommended by him, mortified and grieved him. Yet, in the midst of the painful feelings occasioned by this new proof of the continued desire to break off all communication with him, Strathern could not banish from his mind the one gleam of brightness, slight and evanescent though it had been, which cheered the dark reflexions for the present, and the gloomy forebodings for the future, that filled his troubled breast. The smile with which Louisa had regarded him when first restored to consciousness, the confiding gentleness with which she had resigned her hand to his, for the first few minutes after she had recognised him, bore evidence that he still retained a place in her affections, however misrepresentation—for to nought else could he attribute the change in her conduct towards him—might have operated to induce her to abandon him. The joy of having rescued her from death,

even though the life he had saved might never contribute to bless his own, was a source of consolation, of which not even her ingratitude for the gift could deprive him, and he passed a less gloomy evening and a more calm night than he had known since the day that Mrs. Sydney and Louisa had left Rome.

"They probably received anonymous letters against me," thought Strathern, as he lay in his bed the following morning, reflecting over all the late events. "The same hand that traced the warning to me against Louisa may have taken the same means of destroying her confidence in me, and with greater success. *I* loved too well to attend even for a moment to the concealed slanderers who would poison my mind against her. Ah! why did Louisa not love me sufficiently to spurn the accusation; or, at least, to expose them to me! Yes; it must have been so. But truth must at last triumph, and a day will come when Louisa will discover that I was not, am not, unworthy of her affection."

There was comfort even in this reflection; for, in making it, he retraced his own conduct since he had entered into London life, up to the present period, and he found no act in it which, if exposed to the scrutiny of his enemies—and that he had such he now for the first time began to think — he need blush for,

or that could furnish them with the power of injuring him. How few men of his age — or indeed of any age — could indulge retrospection with so little self-reproach! and that this was something for which he had cause to be thankful Strathern felt in his heart, and was grateful to the Almighty for. When he had left his chamber, he sent a servant belonging to the inn with a note to Mrs. Sydney, requesting to be informed of the health of her daughter. He added an entreaty to be made acquainted with the cause of her repudiation of his attentions and avoidance of his acquaintance, stating that, although he had a right to demand an explanation, in order that he might justify himself from any unfounded charge, he preferred soliciting it as a favour at the hands of one whose good opinion he most highly valued, and whose altered feelings towards him he had deeply deplored. This letter despatched, Strathern felt as if his future destiny depended on its result. Mrs. Sydney could not, in common justice, refuse the explanation he had sought, and, when accorded to him, he could refute every charge, and satisfy her that he had never been guilty of aught to forfeit her esteem, or her daughter's affection. He would not confide this letter to be conveyed by any of his own servants, for his pride and delicacy revolted from *their* being made acquainted with the vicinity of Mrs. Sydney, until he was per-

mitted to see her. He paced the road that led to her abode in a state of agitation and impatience he had never previously experienced, and, before his messenger could have reached half the route, reproached him for his dilatoriness in not having already returned. When he at length saw him at a distance, he walked rapidly to meet him, holding out his hand to receive the expected answer to his letter, almost maddened by the delay occasioned by the messenger searching in his pocket, out of which, having first drawn a comb, a soiled pocket-handkerchief, an old glove, a ball of twine, and some nails, he at last extracted a letter, which bore evident marks of its contact with the said articles. Strathern snatched it from his hand, but how great was his shock on discovering that, instead of the anticipated letter from Mrs. Sydney, he grasped his own !

"How is this?" demanded he, his cheek flushing with disappointment and anger.

"The signoras Inglesés left the villa early this morning, signor, and will return to it no more."

Strathern turned from the man to conceal his emotion; and, such was its extent, that he remained absent from the hotel for some hours, in order that its traces might have time to disappear ere he presented himself before Lord and Lady Delmington. The hopes that had sprung up in his breast the pre-

vious evening were now wholly crushed; and, as he tore his own letter into shreds and scattered them to the air, he vowed that never again would he sue to the justice or pity of those who were so obstinately bent on avoiding him, and of refusing him an opportunity of vindicating himself. Had Mrs. Sydney perused his letter, and then disdainfully returned it, Strathern could not have been more indignant than he felt at the sudden departure of her and her daughter from Como.

"They shall henceforth be released from any importunities of mine," said he; and he set his teeth close, and compressed his lips, as men are wont to do when forming some determination that it has cost them a pang to decide on. "I will not have the appearance of a persecutor who pursues them wherever they go. No; whatever it may cost my feelings, I will in future avoid them as anxiously as they do me, for it is now quite clear to me that they have no wish for my justification."

When he returned to the hotel, Lady Delmington informed him that she had sent a servant to inquire after the health of Miss Sydney, and that he had brought back intelligence that she had left Como early that morning. Strathern felt embarrassed; and this sensation was increased when Lady Delmington added that the servant left in charge of the villa had said

that the move was so sudden a one that the previous morning no intention of it had been named. "This move proves, however," continued she, observing the annoyance her news inflicted on her hearer, "that the health of the young lady could have sustained no serious injury by the danger from which you yesterday rescued her, and I am exceedingly glad of it."

Strathern replied not, and the conversation took another turn, but Lady Delmington felt convinced that her former surmises relative to the attachment of her husband's friend to Miss Sydney were well founded, and pitied him for the depression of spirits under which he laboured. When she communicated her opinion to her husband, from whom she had no thought concealed, he said, "I have but a poor opinion of the heart or head of any girl who could trifle with the affection of such a man as Strathern, who is the very soul of honour, kindness, and generosity."

"But we know not, dearest, what misrepresentations may have led to the estrangement between the lovers; for that lovers they have been I cannot doubt," observed Lady Delmington.

"I have no patience with a woman who *could* believe evil of the man she loved, or who would not at once candidly inform him of the accusations made against him, and so give him the opportunity of justifying himself. I know Strathern well, and could pledge my

life that he is incapable of aught that could—or, at least, that ought to lose him the heart of the woman who had ever accepted his attentions; and this same Miss Sydney, whose life he yesterday saved, must have indeed a cold one, to have, as you told me, prohibited his accompanying her home yesterday, and to have left Como to-day without so much as a line of thanks."

"We cannot tell, dearest, what her reasons may be; for what appears to us so inexplicable..."

"Ah! there you are, Mary—a true woman—ready to defend *your* sex at the expense of *mine*. I do believe that there is a sort of freemasonry among women, and particularly in affairs of the heart, that leads them always to take the side of their own sex."

"I am sure that I, dearest, am more inclined to adopt your opinion than to advocate my own," replied Lady Delmington, stooping down to kiss her husband's brow.

"So you say, Mary, but, somehow or other, you always manage to bring me round to yours, and I dare say in half an hour would persuade me that this cold-hearted Miss Sydney, who has changed my friend Strathern from being one of the most cheerful and agreeable men in the world, to a sighing, pensive lover, for which I owe her no good will, is a most charming and faultless person, who torments him

all for his good. But would you, Mary, have so treated me?"

"Ah! there's the rub!"

"No, you would not, I can answer for it. I know that dear good kind little heart of yours too well to suspect the possibility of such a thing. You would not listen to any charge against me; or, if forced on you, you would soon tell me every word of it, adding, 'I don't believe a single syllable of the story.'"

"Yes, my own kind husband, I am sure I should; but then consider that I am wholly inexperienced, and have seen nothing of the world, while Miss Sydney has the air of a very grand and stately lady. You should have seen how she drew herself up when she declined letting Mr. Strathern walk by the side of her carriage."

"A fig for her grandeur and stateliness! I hate your stately women, who are always thinking of their dignity, when they should be thinking of the poor devils whose heads they have turned. No, my Mary; I like only those dear, soft, and gentle creatures, who, like you, never think of self, and by this total abnegation of it, win every man who has a true heart, and a sense of honour, to take care of them. I wish I could reason Strathern out of this misplaced passion, for it will only embitter his life, and he is too good to be made the victim of a proud and stately coquette."

"Do not make the attempt, dearest. Had you seen the tenderness beaming in her eyes when she first fixed them upon him, when restored to consciousness, you would be convinced, as I am, that she still loves him, and perhaps they may yet be reconciled, and restored to happiness."

"But how the deuce can they, if she *will* run away at the very time when, having saved her life, one might think the ice around her heart might be thawed?"

Here the entrance of Strathern stopped further remark on the subject, though Lord Delmington's opinion was left unchanged.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Absence, where true love doth reign,
Is a source of care and pain;
Yet, as distance doth divide,
It can soften wrath and pride;
And excuses for the dear
(Never thought of when they're near)
Find within the too fond breast,
By Jealousy's sharp pangs oppress'd;
For the urchin Love doth joy
All his cunning to employ,
Glossing o'er each act and fault
That keen agony had wrought,
'Till the heart beneath his sway
Feels its anger melt away.

The surprise and shock occasioned to Mrs. Sydney on hearing of the accident which had occurred to her daughter may well be imagined. The boatman who conveyed the intelligence, though cautioned not to relate the extent of the danger to which Miss Sydney had been exposed, was too much excited by it, as well as by the courage and intrepidity of her rescuer, to

attend to the injunction given him by Strathern, so he entered into a minute detail of the whole event. Fortunately for Mrs. Sydney, the arrival of her daughter ere he had quite narrated what had nearly been a most tragical scene, reassured the terrified mother, who, pressing her beloved child to her breast, wept tears of joy and thankfulness to the Almighty for her safety. A warm bed and some restoratives soon produced the happiest result on the chilled frame of Louisa; but it was evident to her anxious parent that the mind of her daughter had not recovered its usual equanimity, and that a state of excitement existed for which not even her recent danger could account. Unwilling to fatigue her by questions until she had perfectly recovered from the effect of her late dangerous accident, Mrs. Sydney remained by her couch, ejaculating blessings on the rescuer of her Louisa.

"Never will I let a day pass without offering my prayers for *him*," said the fond mother, "without whose aid I might now have been childless. O! my own Louisa, I shudder to think on the peril to which you were exposed! But did you not inquire his name? Did you not tell him to come here, that I might lighten my oppressed heart by pouring forth a portion of the vast debt of gratitude which I owe him?"

"No, mother; and earnestly do I pray that we may neither of us ever again behold him. You look asto-

nished ; but, when I tell you that it was Strathern who saved me, you will not wonder that I should say this !"

" Strathern ! " reiterated Mrs. Sydney. " Now, then, my blessed child, I forgive him all the chagrin he has caused me—all the sleepless nights he has occasioned ; and I will pray that he may see the error of his ways, and repent. But how did he appear ? What line of conduct did he adopt when you were restored to consciousness ?"

" Would you believe it, dearest mother ? he had the courage, the effrontery, to exhibit the same interest and look of affection that would have been natural when I regarded him as my affianced husband, but which, in our present position, was insulting."

" How strange !—and yet he may have repented his infatuation and sin, and, if a true penitent, Louisa, he is at least entitled to our commiseration. The service he has rendered softens my anger, and I would fain thank, though we can no longer reward him."

" Spare your pity ; *he* is unworthy of it. Oh ! mother, you know not the degradation to which your child has been subjected ;" and the pale cheek of Louisa became flushed with feelings of wounded delicacy and indignation. " He was not alone — that woman with whom we saw him at the Coliseum was his companion ; she assisted to restore suspended animation

to my frame;" and the proud and sensitive girl shrank at the recollection that her head had been pillowed on the bosom of one to come in contact with whom she considered the deepest degradation. "Yes, mother, he suffered *her* to remain in my presence, to touch my person, and to shock me with the display of an interest that it was humiliating to experience from one like her! *He* was even so lost to shame and delicacy as to lavish the most tender marks of affection on me before that woman—nay, he proposed to walk by the side of the carriage to see me home! Was such unblushing effrontery ever heard of?"

"It was wrong, very wrong, I must admit, to let her remain near you; but recollect, my precious child, that, in the hurry of spirits and anxiety of such a time, he could not be expected to possess the presence of mind and sense of propriety which, under less painful and trying circumstances, might be looked for. He could not, also, dispense with the aid which this person afforded in restoring you to life, and therefore we must overlook that which would certainly otherwise be highly culpable."

"I cannot regard his conduct in as favourable a light as you do," replied Louisa, sighing deeply as she spoke, unconscious how far the severity with which she viewed it was occasioned by the pangs of jealousy which tortured her heart.

"He did not premeditatedly intrude this woman into your presence, dearest," said Mrs. Sydney; "recollect this, for it mitigates his offence. He was, I conclude, walking with her when he beheld your danger, and rescued you from death; and when he bore you to the shore, to all appearance lifeless, as the boatman asserted, he was, I dare say, but too happy to have the assistance of a woman to restore suspended animation to this dear frame;" and the doting mother stooped down to her daughter's couch, and pressed her fondly to her breast.

"We must leave Como, mother, and that as soon as possible; I cannot consent to remain where *he* is. Bear with me: I know that it is weak and childish to feel this strong, this indomitable desire to avoid him, but I cannot control it, and you will, I know, indulge your wayward child, and take her from a place that has now become unbearable to her."

"Certainly, dearest; we will leave Como, if you so earnestly desire it, and I will arrange that we may depart in a few days."

"Talk not of a few days, mother; every hour that sees me here will appear an age, so great is my impatience to be gone. Let us depart to-morrow, at daylight: do, dearest mother, comply with this request, for I shall not feel a moment's peace until we are far away from this."

When had Mrs. Sydney ever been known to refuse compliance with the desires of her daughter? and never was she less likely to decline gratifying them than at the present time, when her child, always inexpressibly dear to her, was now, if possible, still more so, when restored to her from the brink of death. She felt more than ever how wholly her happiness—nay, her very existence itself—depended on that of her child. She immediately gave the necessary instructions to her servants to have everything ready for departure the following morning at an early hour; and Louisa, assured of this, felt more composed than she had been since the accident that had so nearly deprived her of life. Conscious that, on first opening her eyes, and feeling that she had been saved by Strathern, the affection for him that had, in spite of all her efforts to subdue it, still kept its place in her breast, had been suffered to reveal itself, her pride and delicacy revolted at the notion that *he* had seen that he was still dear to her. *He*, the companion of *one*, the very thought of whom tortured her with all the pangs of jealousy and indignation—would he not remember the soft expression of the eyes that met his, and the smile that greeted him when returning consciousness had revealed the secret of her heart, and on comparing both with the angry scorn that marked her glances when, a short time after, she discovered the presence of his mistress, would

he not attribute her altered manner to the true cause —jealousy and wounded pride?

These were the questions that the proud and sensitive girl demanded of herself, as she lay on her couch, writhing under the angry feelings that filled her breast. What had she best do to prove to him that appearances were erroneous, and to convince him that he was now only an object of dislike and contempt to her? She would immediately leave Como, before he could have an opportunity of making any appeal to her mother, or even an inquiry after her own health; which last she felt assured he would not fail to do, after the anxiety he had betrayed about her that day. Yes, she would convince him of her perfect indifference, and efface the impression which her involuntary kindness might have produced.

Thus, while hope was cheering the heart of Strathern, based on the soft expression of the beautiful eyes of Louisa when they met his, and on the sweet smile that parted her lips when she noted the anxiety with which he bent over her, she was regretting and reproaching herself for having bestowed this brief moment of happiness on him, and laying plans for destroying its impression. How little did he dream that, while he was intent on soliciting an explanation, which his conscience told him he had a right to demand, and hoping that a reconciliation, which would restore him to the

bliss for which he sighed, would be the result, the object on whom he still doted was intent on placing herself out of his reach, and recalled to mind, with shame and anger, the marks, slight though they were, of tenderness towards him, that had involuntarily escaped her!

Mrs. Sydney and her daughter were many miles distant from Como ere the messenger who bore Strathern's letter reached the villa she had occupied. How differently might affairs have terminated, had their departure been postponed even for a few days; for, though his letter would not, in all probability, have produced the effect he desired—his asking an explanation while supposed to be the companion of her who was believed to be his mistress, being, in the eyes of Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, an aggravation of his offence—they could not in the end fail to hear that his travelling companions were Lord and Lady Delmington, and this fact would have at once cleared up their evil thoughts of him, and vindicated his conduct. Had they received the garrulous physician of Lord Delmington, *he* would soon have revealed the truth; for, proud of being the medical attendant of the future Marquis of Roehampton, he never missed any opportunity of introducing "his lordship" and "her ladyship" into his discourse, and would soon have made them acquainted with every particular relating to the travellers.

Unhappily, pride, the old leaven which still bore such a preponderating influence in the character of Louisa Sydney as to quell, if it could not eradicate, the affection which had taken so strong a root in her heart, dictated the line of conduct she had decided on adopting, and marred the chance afforded of seeing her lover justified, and having their mutual happiness restored. Yet, though anxious to depart from Como, she could not leave its umbrageous shades, its beautiful scenery, and its verdant glades, among which she had so loved to wander, nor the glassy lake, on whose tranquil bosom she had so often watched the sun's decline, and which had been so near becoming her grave, without deep emotion. That scenery, that lake, were now for ever associated in her mind with him who had risked his life to save hers; and, although indignant and jealous, who can say how much of the regret she experienced on leaving Como might be caused by the reflection that in quitting it she left *him* behind? However this might be, her spirits, which during the bright sunshine of the day had been rather more animated than usual—and she was proud of letting her mother see this—sank when the shades of evening descended around, and she no longer felt capable of the exertion that had hitherto carried her through the effort of appearing cheerful. Her countenance being shrouded in darkness, and safe from the scrutiny of her fond

parent, she now suffered the tears so long checked to steal down her cheeks, and yielded to the melancholy reflections that in these hours of silence and gloom would make themselves heard. She almost wished that she had not left Como, and blamed herself for having urged her mother to that step, now that it was too late to repent it; yet, when her imagination pictured Strathern roaming in the spots through which she had so often roved, with that beautiful but erring woman leaning on his arm, or seated at evening by his side, addressing to her those looks and words once directed solely to herself, the poisoned arrow of jealousy rankled at her heart, and it was only by a strong effort that she could suppress the sighs and groans that rose from her tortured breast. How she longed to be alone, freed from all restraint, that she might relieve her overburthened feelings by weeping!—for she dreaded even to apply her handkerchief to wipe away the tears that were chasing each other down her cheeks, lest her mother should become aware of them.

Once or twice Mrs. Sydney spoke to her, but, unable to sustain a conversation without betraying her emotion, Louisa feigned sleep, and her fond parent remained immoveable lest she might disturb her slumbers. But too well did her swollen lids and pale cheeks attest the truth when they halted for the night, and Mrs. Sydney with an aching heart marked these

proofs of sorrow in her child. The repast served to them was removed untasted, and, fatigued and saddened, both sought their pillows at an early hour, to indulge in solitude those painful reflections which rendered conversation irksome, if not impossible.

When they met at breakfast, next morning, Mrs. Sydney said, "Now, my precious child, it is for you to decide where we shall direct our course."

"Wherever you please, dearest mother; anywhere but where we are likely to meet *him*."

"I think it will be best for us to proceed at once to England, and pass the summer at home. The tranquillity of dear Sydney Park, with its noble old trees, and fresh verdure, will be pleasant to us after so long a sojourn in Italy, which, with all its attractions, can show no glades or lawns like our own. It seems long, very long, too, since I visited the graves of those dear ones—never forgotten—where I shall one day take my last earthly rest."

"Would to Heaven, mother, that I were sleeping with them!" exclaimed Louisa, passionately, "for I long to be 'where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.'"

"And would you leave me alone on earth?" demanded Mrs. Sydney reproachfully — "*me*, who—when, sorely smitten by the hand of affliction, and tempted to pray for death to re-unite me to him who

made the happiness of my existence—quelled my selfish wishes, and learned to bear the heavy load of life for your sake, Louisa, then incapable of feeling the effort I made, and for the sake of my blessed son, doomed to be afterwards torn from me by relentless death?"

"Forgive me, mother—forgive your selfish child. I, too, will learn to submit, and patiently wait until the Almighty sees fit to call me hence. Bear with me, until I have acquired the resignation for which I will pray. I was too, too happy—too proud of *him*—and the discovery of his unworthiness has shattered so many bright hopes, that it will, I fear, be long ere I recover the fortitude of which you, dearest mother, have given me so fine an example, and which you have a right to expect in me. Yes, let us go to England, and in the tranquil shades of Sydney Park be everything to each other. I can now better sympathize in your regrets, mother, for I too have known sorrow; but you have a consolation denied to me—*those* whom you mourn died worthy of your love. No bitterness can mingle in the tears you shed for their loss, while I"——and here a passionate burst of tears impeded her utterance.

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Mrs. Sydney and her daughter proceeded by easy journeys to England.

"Let us avoid London, mother, for I could not bear to find myself in its noise and turmoil in my present state of mind," said Louisa, as they journeyed towards their native land.

Travelling, hitherto an exciting and interesting pleasure to Miss Sydney, always producing an unusual exhilaration of spirits, had now lost all charms for her. Anxious to draw her thoughts from the one painful subject that engrossed them, her mother proposed to visit the noble antiquities in the south of France on their route, and directed their *courrier* to proceed to Nismes and Arles. But even the beautiful and celebrated *Maison Carrée* and theatre at Nismes failed to interest Louisa, who, previously to her disappointment of the heart, would have duly appreciated both these fine specimens of Roman taste and grandeur; but if she now looked at them with any interest, it was because they reminded her of the brevity of life, and the nothingness of human beings, as contrasted with the works of their hands, which outlive for centuries and centuries the frail mortals who constructed them. Seeing how little power the sight of objects, which formerly would have highly gratified her daughter to behold, now possessed to draw her from her regrets, Mrs. Sydney abandoned her project of proceeding to Arles, and pursued the direct route to Paris. The travellers halted but two days to re-

fresh themselves in that gay capital, and were, perhaps, the only ladies who ever left it without furnishing themselves with any of those articles of female gear for the perfection of which Paris has long held an unquestioned supremacy over every other city in Europe. But what cared Louisa Sydney now for dress? There was no one whom she wished to please, and she no longer felt that gratification, often enjoyed by the young and beautiful, even when no lover exists whose tastes they wish to study, of seeing themselves adorned. No, she positively turned from her mirror, dissatisfied with that face and form which could not secure the fidelity of him she had so fondly loved, and lost faith in those charms, the powers of which *she* only could doubt.

Arrived at Calais, and shown into the same sitting-room which they had occupied when they last landed from England, how many painful thoughts filled Louisa's mind! Cheerful and happy then, the world presented nothing but bright and smiling prospects before her. Possessed of all that could render life agreeable, she had not a care or a wish ungratified; while now, though still in the possession of all that she then owned, the want of one good, since acquired, rendered the others insufficient to her happiness. What to her was wealth, beauty, and health, without the love that had changed the whole current of her

existence from a smooth and tranquil stream into a wild and gushing river—that engulfed all feelings in the one blissful one, of loving and being loved! Only the bitterness of love now remained. She could not chase the image of him to whom she had been affianced from her heart; but, while it reigned there, in spite of her reason, her volition, and her pride, the torturing recollection that she could never more respect him so loved, and that he had deceived her, and preferred the society of a wanton to hers, never for a moment left her memory. If she could but forget that "such things were, and were most sweet," as mutual affection—or at least the believing in them—of happy hours enjoyed, and still happier ones anticipated, in lives to be passed together, she might yet learn to resume the peace of mind that was hers when last she sat in the room she was now in. She glanced around at the pictures on the walls, and on the furniture; every thing was unchanged, and presented so precisely the same aspect as when she last looked on them, that she could have fancied that only a few days, instead of two years, had elapsed since then. But *she*—oh! how was she changed!

The travellers' book was brought for them to enter their names, and, having done so, Louisa listlessly turned over the pages. Many were the acquaintances whose signatures she recognised, and at length her eye

fell on the well-known one of Strathern. Close to it, and in a very minute hand, which, however, she saw at a glance was his, she perused two lines in Italian, signifying that "he left his native land with a heart that ne'er had owned the power of love, and that joyed in its freedom." She read and re-read the lines, and a gleam of joy passed through her heart, at the confirmation which they afforded of the truth of the asseveration he had so often made of his never having loved before he knew her. For a brief space she forgot, in the pleasure which the perusal of these lines afforded her, all that had occurred to preclude Strathern from ever more being aught to her than a stranger; but soon came the bitter recollection, and as she turned over the page inscribed with his name, she breathed a wish that she could as easily turn over a new leaf in her memory, and forget the events of the last few weeks, which had made such a fatal breach in her happiness.

On going on board the packet next morning, the first person Mrs. Sydney encountered was one of her oldest and most valued friends, Sir Charles Effingham. He took a seat on deck, by her side, and entered into conversation with her and Louisa, delighted to meet them, after so long an absence. In the course of it, he made inquiries about the English at Rome the preceding winter.

"Ah! the Wellerbys were there," observed he, "and as usual, I suppose, husband-hunting. What young men had you there?"

Mrs. Sydney named all but Strathern, for she feared to excite painful memories in the breast of her child by pronouncing his name.

"But was not Strathern at Rome?" asked Sir Charles Effingham.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Sydney.

"Then, how came you, fair lady, to pass him over? Surely among all the young men, *he* must have been distinguished for his various fine qualities, personal and mental. Strathern is a very remarkable young man, I assure you. I have known him from his boyhood, and consider him to be the most gifted and high-principled person among the whole circle of my youthful friends. He left England without ever having been suspected of a single folly, and yet the prudence which this steady conduct implies has not prevented him from being esteemed one of the most open-hearted and generous fellows breathing."

"He is certainly a very superior person in appearance, manners, and accomplishments," observed Mrs. Sydney.

"Appearance, manners, and accomplishments!" repeated Sir Charles Effingham, opening his eyes to their utmost extent, and elevating his eyebrows.

"Why, my dear lady, these are his least merits. Strathern possesses the most solid and sterling qualities, with the nicest sense of honour. But I see you were only slightly acquainted with him. Had you known him as I have done, you would be warm in his praise as I am. I am not one of those old crabbed fellows who believe that men have deteriorated in modern days, and who look with indifference on the young men of the age. I take a deep interest in the rising generation, and see, with satisfaction, the young men of it, who not only love, but are sure to serve their country in its senate, as well as by fulfilling their duties as landlords and country gentlemen."

Why did Louisa Sydney's pale cheek assume a rosy hue, and her ears drink in with delight the warm eulogiums of Strathern? Was the love he had inspired her with still alive and vigorous as ever in her breast, or was it only the smouldering ashes of the former fire that, fanned by the commendations on her lover, sent forth a bright but transient flame? She turned her head aside, to conceal her emotion, and, fixing her eyes on the waves over which the vessel was gliding, breathed a wish that the sea might not long divide her from him, whom, though she might not see, she yet desired should inhabit the same land as she did.

"I should like to know," thought she, "that he was fulfilling his duties in his own country, and justifying the good opinion of his friends, although he now never can be aught to me. In England, too, the salutary curb of public opinion would preclude him from the association which, in a foreign land, he does not blush to indulge. Yes, I wish he were in England, for it would give me pleasure to read of his earning distinction, though I am not to share it, and that his life was a useful and honourable one, though it can never more brighten or bless mine. O, Strathern! how many blissful hopes have you shattered to the earth! How have you dimmed a future once so smiling!"

Mrs. Sydney, believing her daughter to be in one of those fits of abstraction into which of late she not unfrequently plunged, asked Sir Charles Effingham, in a low tone of voice, if Strathern's moral character was unimpeachable?

"More so than any young man I know. Public rumour, my good lady, flies rapidly, and soon makes the world acquainted with the follies and failings of those who take a prominent position in it, however secretly their indulgence in them may be. I never heard the breath of censure or scandal busy with Strathern's name. No gallantries in fashionable life, no sins in private; I have even heard some of his less

scrupulous contemporaries call him prudish and straight-laced, because he would not join them in dinners given at Greenwich and Richmond, to ladies more remarkable for the display of their persons in the ballets at the Italian Opera, than for their modesty when off the boards, or in the *petit soupers* given to those same *figurantes*, which, if fame speaks truly, emulate those of the Orleans Regency in France in all save the wit which is said to have illumined those celebrated orgies."

Not a word of this dialogue escaped the ears of Louisa, and she listened to it with a strange pleasure. That a man who, without any engagement of the heart, was so scrupulous in his avoidance of female society he could not respect, should, when affianced to the object of his choice, be so lost to all sense of propriety and decorum as to appear in public as the protector of a woman whose acquaintance he dared not own to them, or whose very name he would not mention even to Mr. Rhymer, seemed more incomprehensible than ever; and yet that he had done so she could not doubt—her own eyes had beheld the painful, humiliating fact, and again the spirits of Louisa drooped, and her bosom sent forth one of those deep sighs that of late frequently escaped it. Mrs. Sydney felt an inexpressible satisfaction in hearing Sir Charles Effingham, of whose good sense, knowledge of the

world, and sincerity, she could not entertain a doubt, confirm all the good impressions of Strathern formerly imprinted on her mind. If left to her own cool and dispassionate judgment, she would have at once acquainted Strathern of her having seen him at the Coliseum with the strange lady, and so have given him an opportunity of justifying himself, if he could do so; and if this was impossible, she would, at least, have the consolation of knowing that she had done her duty both as a mother and a friend. But Mrs. Sydney, doatingly fond of her only child, was unfortunately wholly governed by *her* wishes, and jealousy had taken too strong a hold of Louisa to permit her to view her lover's conduct through any medium save its own jaundiced and distorted one, so he was condemned unheard. Mrs. Sydney had often regretted not having followed the dictates of her own mind at Rome by a frank avowal of what she and her daughter had seen; but never did she so much regret it as now, when her old friend, Sir Charles Effingham, had revived her former good opinion of Strathern, and made her almost doubt the evidence of her eyes. "Would that I had been more firm," thought she; and so she had often previously thought on matters of much less importance, for she had the good sense to discern her own yielding weakness to the opinions of her daughter, though not the firmness to withstand them. "My poor child,"

thought Mrs. Sydney, "is punished for my error. I ought to have been firm, and should have resisted her wishes in a point where my own reason told me I was right." And this excellent but too yielding woman exonerated her daughter from all blame for her wilfulness, while taking herself severely to task for her weakness.

"There are the white cliffs of Dover," exclaimed Sir Charles Effingham. "I give you joy, ladies, on your return to your native land. *I* am glad to see it again, though only three months absent from it—for people may say what they will about better climates, and all the other advantages of foreign countries—*I* have never seen any to compare with our own, and prefer its fogs and cloudy skies to the clear air and blue ones even of sunny Italy."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Marriage, the gravest act in all man's life,
The bond of peace, or chain of endless strife,
That gives the colour to each future year,
And gilds with happiness, or turns to sear
The span allotted to him here below,
Till Death has summoned him from hence to go—
How strange that some, without one serious thought,
A state will enter with such import fraught!
Intent some sordid, selfish end to gain,
They madly rush to Hymen's sacred fane,
Profane the altar, mock its solemn laws,
The love of gold the sole excuse or cause.

Three days after Mrs. Maclaurin's arrival at Naples, she was, according to newspaper parlance, led to the hymeneal altar by Lord Alexander Beaulieu, attended by Lord Fitzwarren. Hardened as the feelings of the bridegroom were, he winced a little when, arrived at the embassy, he noticed the glances

of astonishment exchanged between the minister, his secretary, and one of the *attachés*, when they beheld the bride elect. Mrs. Maclaurin, notwithstanding the advice of her future *caro sposo*, was determined to do honour to the nuptials by wearing a splendid dress on the occasion. It consisted of an under robe of white satin, over which she wore a splendid tunic of point-lace, with a veil of the same costly material. A *parure* of magnificent pearls, and a wreath of orange-flowers, put on *malgré* the reiterated advice of Mademoiselle Justine, completed her costume; and never had her plainness, not to say ugliness, been more conspicuous than in this splendid dress, the whiteness and purity of which formed so striking a contrast with her coarse, red face, neck, and arms. Lord Fitzwarren, who lent her his arm, could not resist winking at the secretary and *attaché*, old acquaintances of his, as he drew their attention towards the lady, who affected all the airs of a timid girl, but, unfortunately, so much overacted her part, as to add considerably to the ridiculousness of her appearance.

"Mrs. Maclaurin, Lord Ayrshire," said Lord Alexander Beaulieu, presenting his future bride to the English minister, who bowed lowly.

"I am very glad to make your lordship's acquaintance," observed Mrs. Maclaurin, "though I am so fluttered and agitated, as is natural to a person in my

position, that I must beg you to make allowance for my shyness."

Lord Alexander Beaulieu bit his lip, and muttered a curse on her between his teeth.

"We surely are not to be married *here!*" resumed the lady. "Have you no chapel fitted up for occasions like the present? for being married in a drawing-room, does not, to my thinking, seem like a real ceremony."

"I regret, madam, that we have no chapel in the embassy. Nevertheless, the ceremony performed by a clergyman of the Church of England in this room is perfectly legal."

"Give me my smelling-bottle, Mrs. Bernard, for I feel quite overcome. Let me have my fan too."

"I am very sorry, madam, but I have not brought either," replied the *dame de compagnie*, looking very much alarmed.

"Not brought either! Why what could you have been thinking about? You are the most stupid woman in the world not to have guessed, that if one ever wanted a smelling-bottle and a fan, it would be on such a trying occasion as going to be married."

Again Lord Alexander Beaulieu bit his lip and changed colour. He had wished that Mrs. Bernard, who really looked like a gentlewoman, should pass as a friend, and not as the humble companion of Mrs.

Maclaurin, thinking that it gave more respectability to his future wife; but the ill-breeding and vulgarity of Mrs. Maclaurin defeated his wish, and revealed the dependant position of her timid *dame de compagnie.*

"You may think that because I have 'Mrs.' tacked to my name, I need not be so alarmed at being married," observed Mrs. Maclaurin, addressing herself to Lord Fitzwarren, with whom, during the last two days, she had become perfectly at her ease.

"Why, one *might* think so," replied the peer, "but there are some things one never gets used to, and the marriage ceremony is, I suppose, one of them."

"You don't understand me, my lord; the fact is, that although I have been once married before, it was just like not being married at all, for Mr. Maclaurin . . ."

Here Lord Alexander Beaulieu cut short her speech by reminding her that the clergyman was ready.

"Oh, dear, I hope I shan't faint, but I really feel all no how," said the bride elect, as she tottered towards a table, arranged as a substitute for an altar, and the ceremony commenced. It was a curious sight, and might furnish matter for grave reflection, to see how little the pair at the altar, and those that surrounded them, with the exception of the clergyman and Mrs. Bernard, were impressed with the solemnity

of the service that was to unite for ever the destinies of two beings wholly dissimilar. Lord Alexander Beaulieu thought only of the wealth which this ceremony would insure him, and the lady of the title and station to which it would raise her. She felt no love for him whom she was vowing to love, honour, and obey, her vanity alone prompting her desire for the marriage. Lords Ayrshire and Fitzwarren, with the secretary and *attaché*, thought only of the absurdity of the plain and vulgar woman who was being metamorphosed into Lady Alexander Beaulieu, and how dearly bought her wealth must be when it entailed the necessity of being encumbered with herself into the bargain.

The clergyman, struck by the affectation and folly so apparent in the bride, as well as by the ill-concealed indifference of the bridegroom, reflected on the little chance for happiness such a union presented, and pronounced the words that were to bind them indissolubly to each other with more than usual solemnity, while Mrs. Bernard, who had not been present at any marriage since her own, felt her eyes moisten as she heard the same words uttered that united her to a husband whose affection and virtues could never be effaced from her memory, although he had long been consigned to the grave. She remembered with what heartfelt devotion she had pronounced the vows now

so lightly pledged by another, and how faithfully she had kept them. The whole scene in the village church, where she had been baptized as well as married, was brought fresh to her mind by the words of the ritual, never since heard. The parents who blessed, the friends who congratulated, the grey-headed pastor who united her to the only man she had ever loved, and, above all, the dear face of her bridegroom, beaming with affection for her, seemed once more brought before her.

The conclusion of the ceremony, and the moving about and speaking of those who were present, aroused her from the reverie into which she had fallen, and the coarse voice of the bride, demanding whether she was not asleep, reminded her that she was far, far from the tranquil scene her memory had so faithfully pictured, a stranger in a foreign land, a dependant on a harsh and unkind mistress, who made her feel all the bitterness of dependance, and a poor, forlorn widow, with nothing of past happiness left but its memory.

"Why, what has happened to you?" demanded the bride, looking angrily at her *dame de compagnie*.

"I beg your pardon, madam," said Mrs. Bernard, intending to offer some excuse for her abstraction.

"Be so good as to remember that I am now a lady

of title, and therefore I expect to be called my lady, or your ladyship."

How Lord Alexander Beaulieu's cheek reddened as he heard this speech, and noted that not *his* ear alone had listened to it!

"Permit me to offer your *ladyship* my congratulations," said Lord Ayrshire; and the bridegroom fancied that the minister maliciously laid an emphasis on the word ladyship.

"I thank your lordship very much, and hope you will come and dine with my lord and me to-day?"

Again the bridegroom bit his lip.

"I regret exceedingly that it is not in my power to accept your ladyship's flattering invitation on so happy an occasion, but an engagement of long standing precludes it."

"Perhaps these gentlemen," said the bride, turning to the secretary and *attaché*, "will favour me with their company?"

Lord Alexander Beaulieu positively longed to beat her, and betrayed his anger by looks, though he did not give it utterance. The secretary and *attaché*, much to the bridegroom's relief, pleaded a prior engagement; but the lady, "on hospitable thoughts intent," extended her invitation to the clergyman. Lord Alexander Beaulieu now lost patience, and seizing his bride's arm somewhat *brusquely*, led her

from the room before the clergyman had quite concluded his grave and cold refusal to accept her invitation. She paused, however, on reaching the door, and, turning to the reverend gentleman, presented him with a gold snuff-box, filled with coins of the same precious metal.

"Accept this, sir," said she, "in token of my gratitude for the service you have rendered me. All I require in return is that you will have the joy-bells rang in honour of the ceremony;" and so saying, she departed, and entered her carriage, which was surrounded by a crowd of gaping *lazzaroni*, attracted by the white and silver favours with which her servants were plentifully decked.

"Throw them some silver, and don't be sparing of it," said the bride to her courrier, "and tell them to drink to the health of Lord and Lady Alexander Beaulieu."

Accustomed to act for herself, the bride was quite forgetful that, in thus bestowing her gifts and issuing her orders, she was placing her husband in a subaltern and somewhat awkward position. *He* felt it, and betrayed that he did so, by an increased coldness of demeanour towards his obtuse bride, which bore evidence of his more than indifference, to his positive dislike to her.

"Well, here we are, man and wife," said she, as,

seated in the carriage by her husband's side, Lord Fitzwarren and Mrs. Bernard occupying the seat opposite to her, they drove to the Grand Bretagne. "I don't know whether it is the flurry of spirits I was in during the ceremony, or not, but I declare I never felt so hungry in my life. What a bore it is to feel half-famished, with the certainty of finding nothing at the hotel that I like, and on one's wedding day too! I'm determined never to move a single post again as long as I live, without a cook, who can make sally-lunns, crumpets, and muffins, as well as cook beef-steaks and tender mutton-chops. Would you believe it, my lord, that when I sent down a message from my room yesterday morning, to desire that something very nice should be prepared for my breakfast, and was quite peckish at the thoughts of what it might be, they sent me up a kind of clear brown jelly, with little bits of white meat stuck inside it, and when I asked what it was they said it was an *aspic*. 'What! eat a viper!' said I. 'Sure that was the name of the one that killed the Egyptian Queen that I heard Colonel Fairfax reading about.'"

Here a burst of laughter, which he could not suppress, revealed Lord Fitzwarren's enjoyment of the bride's ignorance and *naïveté*; but she, not the least discomposed by his merriment, said, "Your lordship may laugh as much as you please, but I

assure you they called the dish an aspic, and the very thought of it disgusted me so much that I couldn't eat a morsel. I have heard of the French eating frogs, and thought that bad enough, but that people could be found who would eat vipers, I never expected to see. A penny for your thoughts, my lord (turning to her husband). Why, what has come to you? One would suppose that you were coming from a funeral, instead of a wedding, and your own wedding into the bargain."

Before Lord Alexander Beaulieu could reply to this observation, they arrived at the hotel, at the same moment that a courrier, covered with dust, and on a panting steed, white with foam, galloped to the door.

"Does Milord Beaulieu lodge here?" demanded the courrier, and on being answered in the affirmative, "Lead me to his presence immediately," said he.

"Here is his lordship," observed Durnford, the valet of Lord Alexander Beaulieu, as his master stepped from the carriage, and the courrier, making a low bow, and assuming a grave aspect, drew from his breast a packet sealed with black, which he handed to the bridegroom, whose face became pale as marble, and whose hand trembled as he tore the packet open.

The bride unceremoniously ran to his side, and, placing her red arm on his shoulder, said, "Between

man and wife there are no secrets, my lord, so I will read the letter with you."

Already had his eye, quick as lightning, glanced over the contents. His cheek became flushed, his eyes sparkled, and his lips trembled. He pushed his bride from him, with a gesture of undisguised hatred, and rapidly ascended the stairs, followed by the bridal party, who found him seated, and gasping for breath.

"What in the world ails you?" demanded the newly-made wife. "Haven't I a right to know? Am I not your lawful wife, and as such entitled to be made acquainted with everything that concerns you?"

"Spare me, madam, or you will drive me mad! Do, Fitzwarren, get that woman to be quiet;" and Lord Alexander Beaulieu, having uttered these words, scowled most ferociously at his astonished bride.

"What is the matter, my dear Axy?" asked Lord Fitzwarren.

"Oh, that cursed courrier! had he but arrived an hour sooner! I could kill him, and myself too, for this fatal delay. Pity me, Fitzwarren! Mountserrat is dead, yes, positively dead; and had this news reached me an hour—a little hour sooner, I should have been saved from —— Oh! it is enough to render me a raving maniac!" and he struck his brow, and writhed in agony.

"What does he mean, my lord?" demanded the bride of Lord Fitzwarren, with a look of utter astonishment.

"Do not speak to him now," said the peer, good-naturedly. "He is grieved and agitated, and we had better leave him alone until he recovers his self-possession."

"It may be very well for every one else to leave him, but it's my duty as a wife, and I will fulfil it, to stay with him;" and she walked up to her lord, and attempted to kiss his brow.

"Leave me, leave me!" exclaimed he. "Would that I had never seen you! I must start for England at once."

"What, on our wedding-day and all! Wouldn't it do as well to go to-morrow, for sure your going a little sooner or later can't make much difference, as your brother is dead; and now, for I forgot it before, I wish you joy on being a marquis and coming into a great fortin; and am not I a lucky woman to be so soon made a marchioness?"

The countenance of her husband as he listened to this unfeeling speech expressed the most deadly hatred; not that he felt any sorrow for the death of his only brother; his sole regret, and it was keen and poignant, was that the intelligence of this event had not reached him in time to have stopped his ill-starred

nuptials; and, goaded almost to madness at the thought that now, in the possession of high rank and unbounded wealth, he found himself saddled with a woman whom he loathed, and to whom he considered the extension of his title as nothing short of a profanation. Strange to say, even in the course of a few minutes, all his ideas and feelings had undergone a perfect transformation; and he who, two hours previously, would have smiled in derision at what he would then have termed an aristocratic prejudice, namely, the dislike to wed a woman for gold, when no other means offered for acquiring it, now shrank with a disgust that he attempted not to conceal from her who had been the victim of his cupidity. What, *he*, the Marquis of Mountserrat, lord of the princely domains and feudal castle that descended to him from a long line of noble ancestors, was he to be pointed at by the finger of Scorn as the husband of a low-born and incurably vulgar woman, who never could open her lips without exposing herself and him? Already he was an altered man. The pride of rank and station had replaced the recklessness which poverty had engrafted on his character, and the consciousness of his vast possessions caused him to reflect with wonder how he could ever have condescended to wed the odious Irishwoman for what he now considered her paltry dowry. The straits to which pecuniary embarrass-

ments had often driven him—the temporising with stern creditors, the appeals to his brother, and the borrowing from careless friends, whose undisguised reluctance to meet his solicitations had rendered their assistance, even when accorded, most humiliating—were all forgotten in the excitement of his new position, the only alloy to the happiness of which consisted in the homely and vulgar woman on whom he had conferred his title. Oh! why had envious fortune thrown this one drop of gall into the cup of joy that would otherwise have intoxicated him? Why had not the news of his elevation to rank and wealth reached him ere he had taken the fatal step which poisoned the enjoyment of both? Such were the reflections that passed through the mind of the Marquis of Mountserrat as, with compressed lips and frowning brows, he sat on the chair into which he had thrown himself on entering the room. "I will never see this odious woman more," thought he. "I will leave her in peaceful possession of her own fortune, but she shall never touch a shilling of mine, never enter any of my houses."

"You'll come to breakfast, won't you, my lord marquis?" said the bride, again approaching her moody husband.

"Fitzwarren, my good fellow, do make her understand that I wish to be left alone."

Before, however, his lordship could interpose, in obedience to his friend's request, the bride had laid her hand on the arm of her *caro sposo*, and repeated her request that he would accompany her to breakfast :— "Consider, my dear lord marquis, that it is our wedding-day, and that I have not been used to remain so long fasting. I feel quite weak and sick, I assure you, for want of my breakfast ; and, if we are obliged to set off to England immediately, as you say, I shall never be equal to the journey, unless I try to recover my strength by food. Don't let your grief make you forget my health."

"Touch me not, approach me not, hateful woman !" exclaimed the marquis, rising from his chair, and pushing her with violence from him. "Know that I detest, that I loathe you ! Were you less obtuse, less stupid and vulgar than you are, I might be saved the annoyance of telling you the bitter truths I can no longer suppress."

"My dear fellow, spare her," said Lord Fitzwarren —"do, pray," his good-nature shocked by the violence of his friend.

"Detest *me !* —loathe *me !*" repeated the bride, panic-struck. "Am I in a dream ? — or is he mad ?" and she looked around for a confirmation to her questions.

"Yes ; I repeat it. I abhor you — the very sight

of you is odious to me!" and the marquis accompanied these words by a glance of such intense hatred, as convinced her even more than them that he spoke the truth.

"And you tell me this on our wedding-day, when I would have given you all I possess!" exclaimed she, her face becoming pale, and her eyes flashing with anger. "You haven't the heart of a man in you: you have a stone in your breast instead. Oh! you base deceiver!—you who so often swore that you loved me, and for myself alone! Yet, somehow, my heart told me you did not really love me. I had my misgivings; but your artful tongue, and the persuasions of Justin, mastered my doubts; and now, almost in the very hour I have become your wife, you are not ashamed to throw off the mask, and to avow your hatred of me, at whose hands you have received only kindness and generosity. You may be a lord and a marquis ten times over, but you are no gentleman, and I tell you so." And here the lady burst into a flood of tears.

"I am glad you now know me," said Lord Mountserrat, "because you will the less regret the separation which will this day take place between us. I shall leave Naples in an hour, and will never more consent to see you. You are full mistress of your fortune and of your actions. Let me advise you to remain on the continent, where your gross vulgarity will be less ob-

served or commented on than in England. I tell you now, once for all, that never shall you enter a house of mine, or be acknowledged by me."

"You can't prevent me from being your wife, and a marchioness into the bargain, and that's some comfort," observed the lady, spitefully. "You thought you had taken me in; but, you see, it is the biter bit, for I'm Marchioness of Mountserrat in spite of your teeth, and you can't prevent my going to England, where I certainly will go and appear everywhere, if only to vex you."

"Come, Fitzwarren, I want to speak to you," said the marquis, rising to leave the room.

"I hope, Lord Fitzwarren, that you will dine with me to-day, though your friend the marquis is taking himself off?" and the deserted bride glanced most scornfully at her husband, who was leaving the room. "I'm now quite ready for breakfast," resumed she, "and shall eat it with no less good an appetite for being rid of a false-hearted scamp, who married me for my money, and who, having unexpectedly come into a large fortin of his own, is not ashamed to insult and desert the woman who showed him such kindness and generosity. I dare say it's all for the better; and, as all I ever wished for was to be a real lady, and to have a grand title, and have got it, I may laugh at the man who has gained nothing by all his deceit but a wife whom he

acknowledges he hates, but whose marriage with him he can't break."

"It was too bad of you, Axy, to cut up the poor woman in that manner," observed Lord Fitzwarren to his friend, when he found himself *tête-à-tête* with him. "You might have decamped, and written a cold but civil letter from the first post, stating your intention of never seeing her again."

"I was only cruel to be kind, Fitz," replied the marquis. "Had I done what you say, she would have thought it necessary to lament our separation, and perhaps have taken it into her head to follow me. As it is, I have so completely mortified her vanity, that she, I dare say, at this moment hates me as cordially as I do her, and is not sorry to be rid of me. I know women well, Fitz, and be assured I have been wise in converting the love of this Gorgon into dislike, which will be much less troublesome and odious to me. You must lend me enough money to take me to England, Fitz, and I will repay it into your banker's in London. It would not do for the Marquis of Mountserrat to borrow money from the woman he is running away from;" and the unprincipled *roué* drew himself up with an air of as much dignity as if he had nothing to reproach himself with. "Ah, Fitz!" resumed he, "how cursedly unfortunate it was that I did not listen to your good advice, and break off, or even postpone, this

hateful marriage! Had I but done so, what a devilish happy fellow I should be, while now..... But it's no good talking or thinking of it; it maddens me to do either!" and he struck his brow, and set his teeth against each other.

"It is a bad job, I must confess, Axy," replied Lord Fitzwarren. "She is not exactly the kind of wife any man would marry, unless driven to it by sheer want of the needful; but, after all, the poor woman seems devilishly good-natured and hospitable, and it is not her fault, but her misfortune, that she is so vulgar. I really pity her."

"Reserve your commiseration for me, my good fellow, for having such a creature to bear my name. *She* has no feelings; and if she had, what could they be in comparison with mine? The low-born and under-bred never have any sensibility, take my word for it, and all pity is thrown away on them."

"No, Axy; hang it, I can't believe that *they* don't feel as much, perhaps, as we do. But this poor woman is, after all, greatly to be pitied."

"*Au contraire*, Fitz, she is much to be envied. Has she not got a title that many of her class would gladly pay tens of thousands for, without its costing her a guinea? And do I not leave her entire mistress of her own fortune, a piece of generosity on my part, for which she ought to be most grateful? She may

well bless her stars at this unexpected change in my affairs, for the payment of my debts would have swallowed up a considerable share of her revenue, and the remainder would have been barely sufficient to contribute to my wants, without leaving anything for her use. I had fully determined on seeing as little of her as possible, and of sending her to vegetate in some secluded and cheap spot in Wales; instead of which she has now ample means for living according to her vulgar and ostentatious taste, and will be plagued by no interference of mine."

The entrance of Durnford to announce that all was ready for his master's departure interrupted the *tête-à-tête* between the Marquis and Lord Fitzwarren, leaving on the mind of the latter a much more unfavourable impression than he had ever previously entertained of him. The utter recklessness with which this heartless *roué* unblushingly avowed his want of honour and delicacy astonished his companion, and he was about to hint his disapprobation, when Mademoiselle Justine rushed into the room, in a state of considerable excitement, and loudly and unceremoniously addressed the marquis.

"And so you be going off, milord, vidout so much as telling me vhere or vhen my bond is to be paid? Dis is very nice, after all de service I have render you in persuading Madame to marry you. Do not look

so proud and so vex, for I tell you dat for all you tink yourself so andsome and so *seduisant*, Madame would never have marry you, if I had not made her."

"I have not time at present, Mademoiselle Justine, to attend to your claims," replied Lord Mountserrat superciliously.

"But I vill make you. Vat you tink, sare," and the *femme de chambre*, with flushed cheeks and eyes sparkling with anger, turned to Lord Fitzwarren, "vat you tink, sare, dis fine milord Anglais give me his bond for five tousand pounds to make Madame *ma maîtresse* marry him, and now he vants to run avay vidout paying de moneys, or so much as telling we vhere or vhen de bond vill be paid."

Lord Fitzwarren's countenance expressed the surprise and disgust which this new discovery of the unworthiness of his *ci-devant* friend occasioned him, and the marquis, as he observed it, seemed for a moment somewhat ashamed. He, however, quickly recovered his usual audacity, and informed Mademoiselle Justine that, as he left her in the undivided power of regulating the expenditure of her mistress, and of abstracting as large a portion of it in the shape of per centage on the purchases that lady might make, as she thought fit, he should advise her to put the bond in the fire, for that, if she attempted to enforce

its payment in England, she would find herself defeated, as he had taken the precaution, by a *douceur* judiciously applied to her legal friend and adviser at Rome, to have the bond so drawn up that it was perfectly invalid, a fact of which she might convince herself by consulting any legal man at Naples on the subject; and then, looking archly at the enraged Frenchwoman, he suggested the prudence of her not permitting the transaction to be talked of, as it would inevitably lead to her dismissal from the profitable place she at present enjoyed.

"*O! le vilain homme! le vilain homme!*" exclaimed Mademoiselle Justine. "Vat a cheat! vat a cheat!" and she looked very much inclined to try the sharpness of her nails on the face of the marquis, who, pressing the hand of the astonished Lord Fitzwarren, who was perfectly astounded at this last trait of consummate roguery in his unprincipled countryman, hastily left the room, followed by his *valet de chambre*, Durnford, whose arm the *femme de chambre* grasped, saying, "And you, Monsieur Dornfort, you who have sworn you loafed me better dan de life, vill you desert me to go vid dat vicked man! Oh, no! it is not possible."

"Very sorry, Mademoiselle Justine, but it can't be helped," and he tried to disengage his arm from the firm grasp of the half frantic Frenchwoman.

"Go, traitor!" exclaimed she, with the air of a tragic actress in some provincial theatrical *corps*. "You are as vicked, and as great a cheat as your *vilain maître;*" and bursting into an hysterical fit of tears, she applied a slap on the face of her recreant lover, with a vigour that made the blood tingle in it, and then rushed to her own room to recover sufficient composure to be ready to attend the summons of her mistress, whenever that lady might ring for her attendance. "Vell, after all," thought she, when she had indulged her tears and wiped her eyes, "it is perhaps all for de better. Madame is now, as I hear, a marquise, a very fine title, next to a duchesse, and I sall take precedence at de *table d'hôte* of every *femme de chambre*, except dat of a duchesse, and dis is vera good ting for me. And Madame is now married, and safe from de designing men vot vould vant to marry her—and yet have no usband to interfere vid my profits, and spend all her money—and dis is good. All I fear is, dat dis *mauvais sujet*, ven he spend all de fortune his broder left him, vill come and take hers. Dat vould be *terrible!* Vell, vot I must do is to make as moche money out of my foolish mistress as I can before *he* have time to spend his fortune, and den I vill be safe. *Mon Dieu!* vat a rogue dat milord is! I never tink any Englishman, and above all a milord, could be so clever. He has beat me, Justine Geroux,

out of de field, and yet before dis I never did pass for a fool. And dat *vilain avocat* at Rome! *Quel brigand!* Oh! ven I see him, I vill give him such box on de face, as he sall never forget!"

The Marquis of Mountserrat, attended by his trusty *valet de chambre*, Durnford, descended to his carriage, amid a crowd of waiters, *frotteurs*, &c., headed by the host, whose wondering looks and profound bows somewhat irritated his lordship's nerves.

"My Lord Fitzwarren will settle all my accounts, and satisfy the courrier who arrived this morning," said his lordship to the bowing host; and, having clasped the hand of his friend, and uttered a few apologetic words for the trouble he was imposing on him, he entered his carriage, and was whirled rapidly off, in little more than two hours after he had entered the hotel with his bride, whose existence he now appeared as wholly oblivious of as if she had never crossed his path.

"Well, my friend Axy is a cool hand, I must confess," thought Lord Fitzwarren to himself, after having ordered all the bills of the marquis to be sent to him for payment. "*He* never bestows a thought on the feelings of other persons, but goes straightforward to the point that suits his own wishes. If *I* were as careless on these matters as he is, how easily *I* might set off, and leave poor Livy in the lurch!"

And such is the danger of bad example, that the possibility of taking such a step for once crossed his mind. But the monosyllable *poor*, which he had mentally attached to the name of his betrothed bride, awakened better feelings in his breast; and he shook himself, as if in the act of throwing off some noxious insect, and raised his head erect as he exclaimed, "No, no, hang it all; I am made of different stuff from Axy, and could not bring myself to behave ill to a woman. No, poor Livy! *you* shan't be made unhappy, whatever *my* lot may be in a marriage, for which I have no more stomach than for a luncheon an hour after a hearty breakfast. But I must go and say a few civil words to the deserted bride. Poor devil! she is left in a most awkward position, I must say;" and the good-natured earl proceeded to the *salon* of the newly-made marchioness. He fully expected to find her in grief, or in anger — perhaps in both. Great, then, was his surprise when he beheld her busily engaged with Mrs. Bernard in turning over the pages of a well-thumbed peerage, with no more traces of sorrow or anger in her countenance than if she had experienced no disappointment.

"Oh! my lord," exclaimed she, "I am so glad you are come, for you can assist me. I want, now that I am a marchioness, to have the coronet and arms at once placed on my carriages, and Mrs. Ber-

nard is bothering my brains about quarterings and supporters. I tell her that I will have no quarters, for I am fully entitled to have all the honours of the Marquis of Mountserrat's arms, and, as to supporters, a well-lined purse and plenty of money in the funds are the best supporters of nobility and grandeur that I know."

"Mrs. Bernard, I dare say," replied Lord Fitzwarren, "means that you ought to have your arms quartered with those of Mountserrat."

"Lord bless you, I have no arms except these," and she held up hers. "If something *must* be added to the Marquis's, I'll have a large purse chuck-full painted—what do you think of that?"

"No bad substitute, I confess, madam."

"So the marquis is off, and without so much as saying good-bye to his lawful wife! If any one had told me that a lord, and above all a marquis, could behave so badly, I wouldn't have believed it. But I'm not sorry, for, if he had come, he would probably have asked me for money, which, for decency sake, I could not have refused him, as he is my husband; whereas, by his going off, without taking leave of me, I needn't pay his bills here. He's a bad one, you may be sure, and I have had a good riddance of him, and have got a grand title, of which he can't deprive

me, without its costing me much. So I have the best of the bargain."

Lord Fitzwarren, seeing how little the deserted bride stood in need of consolation, took his leave, avowing to himself that the wife was quite as unfeeling as the husband.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

When care sits heavy on the breast,
And all we seek is peace and rest,
How irksome 'tis to feel pent in
Within the crowded city's din!
How empty seem the scenes of joy
That all the idle hours employ
Of pleasure's votaries, who live
Heedless what Fate next hour may give!

Gladly would Mrs. Sydney and Louisa have avoided entering London, had not business compelled them to do so. They, however, determined to make but a brief stay in the metropolis, to the gaieties and bustle of which their minds were but ill-attuned, under their present feelings.

There are few things more depressing to the spirits, when aught has occurred to interrupt their usual

equanimity, than the entrance into a vast and populous city. The crowded streets, the number of gay equipages rolling in quick succession along, and the air of occupation which pervades every one to be met with, make those who are indisposed to mingle with the gay and bustling throng still more conscious of their own chagrin, and inspire a longing desire to fly from the heartless pleasures these signs betoken. There is also something peculiarly depressing in entering a city after a long absence, where one has once had a happy home.

Home! that simple word, pregnant with so many dear and fond associations, takes even from the most populous capital the sense of loneliness engendered by crowds. The possession of one house, amid the thousands that constitute a large city, changes its aspect to us. We feel that we have a hearth around which we can draw those dear to us, and be as much at home, and in the enjoyment of as much privacy in the very centre of all the busy throngs of London, as if we were many miles removed from it. There we have set up our household gods, have established our domestic comforts; and the noise, bustle, and gaiety are either, through habit, unnoticed, or else they serve to exhilarate us. But when our *penates* lie shattered to the earth, that in the vast wilderness of brick and mortar before us, we own no spot we can call our

own, that no home awaits us, how different are our feelings! A vague sentiment of alarm takes possession of the mind in this worst of all solitudes, in which we are painfully conscious that in all the gay crowds circulating around us there is not perhaps one whose happiness can be influenced by our absence or presence, or who would mourn were we removed from the earth.

Such were the reflections that passed through the minds of Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, as their travelling-carriage, covered with dust, rolled on to the hotel to which the former had written to have apartments engaged for them.

How different was the appearance of that heavily-laden vehicle to the well-appointed and highly-varnished carriages, drawn by prancing steeds, and attended by liveried domestics, that encountered it at every step! The occupants, too, of these last, in their fresh and tasteful habiliments, what a contrast did they offer to the two pale and languid women, who, in sombre garments, and with thoughtful brows, shrank back into the corners of their carriage, anxious to escape recognition from any acquaintance they might chance to meet!

What to Louisa were the crowds she beheld, knowing, as she did, that Strathern was not among them?—and she wondered, now that a sense of such

loneliness oppressed her, how she had ever had resolution enough to induce her mother to fly from Italy, dear Italy, where at least she might have had the consolation of breathing the same air and beholding the same cloudless skies with him who occupied all her thoughts, but whose name her lips were so reluctant to pronounce.

Arrived at the hotel in Brook Street, they were shown to their apartments by a well-dressed, respectable-looking, and respectful-mannered waiter, and found everything in them so well arranged, that they might almost have fancied themselves in a private house, where they and their servants were the only inmates. Scrupulously clean, and with every article of furniture that could be deemed necessary for comfort, both mother and daughter were compelled to acknowledge that a first-rate London hotel, though less splendidly decorated, gained by comparison with that of every other country.

Their evening was, like all those lately passed, a dull one. Their stay would be so short that they did not wish to have those objects unpacked which not only furnish occupation, but give to every temporary domicile an air of home. The writing-boxes and implements for drawing and embroidery were not brought forth, and the evening papers, with the last *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh Reviews*, were their re-

sources against *ennui*. Neither were disposed to take advantage of them on the present occasion, for, fatigued and dispirited, they reclined listlessly in the comfortable easy chairs provided by their thoughtful host for the fashionable and fastidious guests who frequent his hotel, and who delight in recruiting their strength, after the endless round of pleasures that too frequently exhaust it, in lounging on sofas, or reclining in comfortable chairs.

Neither mother nor daughter gave a sigh to be partakers of the gaieties of which they were every minute reminded by hearing carriage after carriage rolling through the street, conveying its owners to *fêtes*, balls, and *soirées*. After so long a sojourn in the Eternal City, the bustle of London struck them with surprise; and, although greatly tired, it was not until a very late hour in the night, or rather until the morning had dawned, and the sounds of the carriages had subsided, that they found repose.

"It is some comfort," said Louisa, as she sat with her mother at breakfast the next morning, "that no one, except good Mr. Wandsworth, will know of our arrival. It would be dreadful to have a number of visitors, with whom we have not a single idea in common, crowding in on us. Persons during the London season are always so occupied with their pleasures, past, present, and to come, that they can

talk of nothing else, and find those who take no interest in them dull and disagreeable; while to those who, from having been long away, are ignorant of all that forms the sum of their amusements, if not happiness, the details are so stupid and tiresome, that they cannot help wondering how beings with the pretension to rationality can find pleasure in such a round of heartless gaiety."

"We must not become morose, dearest," observed Mrs. Sydney, "the first step to which consists in a want of sympathy in the pleasures, as well as the cares of others, a habit into which we are all prone to fall when our minds have been engrossed by other pursuits. The fashionable world in London would be quite as much bored with our details of what most interested us at Rome, were we so simple as to enter into them, as we should be with their accounts of the operas, balls, concerts, and *soirées*, that fill up their evenings during the season. But let me look at the newspaper." After glancing her eyes over it for a few minutes, "Ah, my child!" exclaimed Mrs. Sydney, "you were premature in declaring that we might here enjoy the comfort of privacy by being incognito. Listen to this flourishing announcement of our whereabouts, under the head of fashionable arrivals. 'At —— Hotel, in Brook Street, last evening, Mrs. and Miss Sydney, with a numerous suite, from the con-

tinent, on their route to the magnificent seat of the beautiful heiress, where a series of splendid hospitalities will mark the return of these distinguished ladies to England, after so long an absence."

"Is not this too bad?" said Louisa Sydney. "How insupportable, that one cannot pass through London quietly, and proceed to one's home, without its being published in the papers! This publicity given to one's movements is, in my opinion, an odious tax on what, in common parlance, is termed fashionable life—a term known only in England. To have one's goings and comings, and one's whereabouts prated of in newspapers—one's hospitalities recorded, and one's attendance at places of amusement entered down, ostentatiously registering one's waste of time and abuse of wealth, is to me very disagreeable."

"It has its *desagrémens*, I must admit, and foreigners notice it as among the most extraordinary of our customs. It exposes us on this occasion to the choice of two evils, and I leave it to you, dearest Louisa, to decide which you prefer to adopt. We must either give orders to be denied to all visitors, by doing which we sanction an untruth, or we must submit to be broken in upon every hour by persons who kill time by bestowing their tediousness on those for whom they feel not the slightest interest."

"Not at home must be the order of the day,

mother, for I have not nerve enough to submit to the other alternative. Oh ! how I long to be out of London !"

Instructions were given to the porter of the hotel to admit no visitors except Mr. Wandsworth, but even this exception need not have been named, for the servant despatched to Lincoln's Inn to acquaint that gentleman of Mrs. Sydney's arrival, and desire to see him, brought back the intelligence that he was dangerously ill.

" Let us then, dear mother, at once go home," said Louisa. " I long to be under the shade of our own magnificent trees, and to feel my foot on those smooth, soft, and verdant lawns, to which we have so long been strangers."

Mrs. Sydney assented to the proposal, and made all her arrangements to leave London early next morning. Glad were both mother and daughter as they sat reading the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh Reviews*, when they heard carriage after carriage drive up to the door, and innumerable cards were sent to them, that they had taken the precaution of being denied to visitors. Among the names were few, if any, of persons whom they felt any desire to see, or who, in all probability, experienced any wish to see them ; and as Mrs. Sydney wrote a list of those to whom cards were to be returned, she smiled at this convenient circulating

medium of keeping up acquaintance, which saves time and trouble.

As evening closed in, Mrs. and Miss Sydney became aware of another consequence of the announcement of their arrival in the morning paper, for countless letters came pouring in to them, soliciting pecuniary aid, from persons of both sexes and all ages, giving such heartrending descriptions of the direful poverty which compelled the applications, as greatly disturbed the equanimity of both the ladies. It would have required the purse of Fortunatus to have enabled these well-disposed women to extricate the various writers of those touching epistles from the overwhelming difficulties in which they avowed themselves to be placed. Nevertheless, the appeals were not all made in vain, and a donation was forwarded to each of those whose claims to commiseration appeared to be the strongest.

At an early hour next morning the ladies were in their carriage; and, as it rolled through the streets, now occupied by governesses and their fair pupils, and nursery-maids, conducting their young charges to the squares and parks, to enjoy the fresh morning air, with milkmen, buttermen, and bakers' boys, taking to their customers their daily supply of these different commodities, and newsmen hurrying along to deliver the morning papers, they were struck by the totally

different aspect they presented to that which they would assume in the afternoon when filled by handsome equipages and well-dressed equestrians and pedestrians. No city presents so brilliant as well as so populous an appearance as London during the fashionable season at certain hours of the day; but at early morn, and from half-past seven o'clock in the evening, when people go to dinner, until it becomes time to attend the *fêtes*, balls, and *soirées* at half-past ten or eleven at night, the streets are comparatively deserted. It is true, carriages, and very frequently splendid one's too, may be seen in the streets—not stopping at the noble mansions of the rich and great, to which the coronets and heraldic honours emblazoned on their panels indicate that they belong, but at gin palaces and less gaudy houses, where all appliances to quench the insatiable thirst said to be a malady peculiar to coachmen and footmen are provided. There may be seen the white-wigged coachman, with laced cocked hat, gorgeous livery, the seams covered with gold or silver lace, seated on the elevated hammercloth, on the sides of which are affixed the armorial bearings of the lordly owner, and, Oh! profanation, the said coachman, forgetful of the dignity of the peerage, no less than of his own, quaffing from a huge pewter pot the beverage he loves, occasionally blowing off with his breath the white froth that impedes his draught,

portions of which descend in spray on his silk stockings and on the hammercloth.

During the operation, his prancing steeds are proudly champing their bits, their glossy coats, arched necks, and distended nostrils, filling with admiration the idle boys hovering around. Nor are the two tall footmen idle. Each is busy with a foaming pewter pot of porter, which, though he swallows with great zest, a certain disdainful toss of the head indicates that he is not quite satisfied with its quality. The subserviency and deferential bearing practised all day towards their lordly masters and mistresses are now exchanged for an easy and impudent demeanour, and a slang phraseology that impresses those around them with a greater notion of their science in the vulgar tongue than of their good behaviour. Butlers and housekeepers, whose employers are gone out to dinner, may be seen, *en grande toilette*, hurrying to evening parties, given either by the servants of other great families, or by the tradespeople whom they employ, leaving the charge of the noble mansions entrusted to them to under-servants, with a strict injunction not to leave the house, and these in turn absent themselves, transferring the trust confided to them to under-housemaids or scullery-maids, who take that opportunity of giving admission to their sweethearts "to take a cup of tea with them," a visit that not unfre-

quently leads to a future robbery, by enabling the said sweetheart to become perfectly well acquainted with the house. Ladies'-maids, elegantly attired in the left-off finery of their mistresses, may be seen tripping lightly along to meet their friends, the *valets de chambres* of the noble visiters of their employers, and housemaids, *en Dimanché*, nimbly walking with the footmen or grooms who had engaged their affections. Shopkeepers and their assistants may be occasionally seen moving towards the parks, to enjoy, as they call it, "a mouthful of fresh air," which *agrémen* has no inconsiderable portion of dust mingled with it. Nevertheless, such as it is, it enables them to support the long hours of confinement in close shops, and the fatigue of standing behind counters and serving their customers all day.

One portion of the inhabitants of London, and a portion standing most in need of a little fresh air to recruit their exhausted frames, are denied this relief—the dressmakers and plain work-women. Oh! would the high and noble dames, for the adornment of whose persons these poor creatures toil through the weary day, and not unfrequently through the long night, reflect at how dear a price the graceful robe that displays the elegance of their forms so well is obtained! They would then combine together, and resolve to use their all-powerful influence to change a system intro-

duced through the desire of meeting the unreasonable demands for dresses to be made up at notices too short to admit of their being finished, except by the sacrifice of the sleep of those who work at them. Could they behold the heavy eyes, the pallid cheeks, the attenuated frames, and care-worn brows of the poor dressmakers, they would never more issue orders for robes to be made in a few hours, and their consciences would be lightened of the weight of their having, for the gratification of their vanity, exacted that which could only be accomplished at so heavy a penalty to the maker. English women are not unfeeling; they are only sometimes forgetful. The fair creature whose delicate throat is encircled by Oriental pearls thinks not of the risk of those who dive beneath the wave to seize these costly gems. Could she but witness the operation, how would she tremble!—nay, we are not sure that even the warmest admirer of pearls would not thenceforth abjure them. So, when ladies see themselves attired in becoming robes, they reflect not on the weary hours of toil the manufacture of them has occasioned; if they did, and we earnestly hope they will, they would soon do all in their power to lighten the labour and to ameliorate the condition of dressmakers.

But we have widely digressed from our story. We left Mrs. and Miss Sydney quitting London on a fine

morning in May, both heartily glad to escape from the metropolis, which at that season is so peculiarly attractive to most of their sex. Both were silent until they reached the suburbs, when Mrs. Sydney observed, pointing to the pretty abodes scattered on each side of the road, their little gardens in front, redolent with bright-coloured flowers and mignonette, the fragrance of which was wafted to them by the fresh morning air, "Look, dearest, at those modest but pretty dwellings. We should search in vain for such in any country save ours. Other lands may show us more stately palaces than England can boast; but these clean, inviting houses, where the clerks of public or private offices and artisans have made their homes, and to which they return every evening when released from their daily task, can be met with only in ours. These very abodes are what most strike foreigners when they first visit England, and I now find myself, after so long an absence, as much pleased with them as strangers are. It seems as if by common accord the upper and middle classes had combined to render our country beautiful and attractive. The parks of the first, with their noble and umbrageous trees branching down to the verdant earth, and beneath which graceful deer, or fine cows, love to shelter themselves from the noontide ray, and the groves and shrubberies scattered around, render a

journey in England delightful; but the picturesque cottages, with their latticed windows wreathed around by the starry jessamine, the twining woodbine, and the blooming rose, to be met at every step, are no less attractive. Even the labourer loves to cultivate the little strip of garden in which his humble cot is embowered; and, though the flowers with which it is filled may be but of the commonest and most homely kind, it nevertheless adds to the beauty of the general picture which every road in our favoured land presents, and helps to acquire for it the praise I have so often been gratified at hearing abroad, where strangers, on their return from England, have said, "Ah! your country is a beautiful garden." This sympathy of taste for rural scenery between all classes exists, I believe, nowhere but with us. In Switzerland it may occasionally be seen in some districts, but here it is universal; and it ought, like sympathies in other things, to beget kind feelings between those who feel it, however different their grades may be."

"We, dearest mother, must become better acquainted with our rustic neighbours, though I should say *I*, instead of we, for you have always taken so deep an interest in them that you are already well acquainted with their affairs, and their wants, to which you have so often and judiciously administered. I have been less mindful, but I must make amends, and

endeavour to find, in adding to their happiness, a consolation for the loss of my own."

Mrs. Sydney pressed her daughter to her heart, but attempted not to offer any of those commonplace and unavailing truisms so frequently resorted to on similar occasions, with a mistaken view of comforting the sorrowful or dejected.

Louisa felt the good sense and delicacy of her mother's forbearance, and thanked her in her heart for it, though a pressure of the hand alone marked her sense of it.

The travellers reached the little village of Silverton that evening, with the goodness of whose inn Mrs. Sydney had been so long acquainted in former times that she had made it a point always to sleep there on her route to and from home. Her presence, and that of her daughter, was hailed with undissembled pleasure by the good old landlady, who, having shown them into her best room, bustled about to prepare the choicest viands which her larder and stewpond could furnish for them.

"Oh! madam, this is, indeed, an unexpected pleasure and honour," said Mrs. Mappleton, as she brought into the parlour an enormous nosegay, hastily gathered from her garden, and placed it in a large India china bowl on a table near the window, which opened into the said garden. "My granddaughter

read in a London paper this morning of your and Miss Sydney's arrival there, and greatly rejoiced we were at the news; but I did not expect that you would leave town in the middle of the season, when all the great folk are there, or that I should so soon have the honour of welcoming you at the Green Dragon."

Mrs. Sydney was touched and pleased at the warmth of the good hostess, and even the pensive Louisa was gratified. An excellent dinner was served in a shorter time than they thought it possible it could be prepared; and as they sipped their coffee after it, seated by the open window, and inhaling the delicious odour of the flowers and mignonette wafted into the room from the garden, they acknowledged that there are few inns that for comfort and quiet can be compared to the good old-fashioned country ones in England, where modern inventions, misnamed improvements, are unknown. Nor were Nurse Murray and the *femme de chambre* of Mrs. Sydney less pleased with their room and good cheer.

"Ay, *this is* something like," said the former, as she partook of the excellent fare set before her. "No kickshaws here, mixed up until one can't even guess what one is eating, but good, plain, wholesome roast and boiled. What fresh fish, what white and plump poultry, and what tender, close-grained mutton! Yes,

this *is* something like a dinner, after being starved in Italy on what they called *minēstra*, by the way of soup, which consists of nothing but warm water, a very little lean meat, some maccaroni, and bad cheese; and three or four other equally bad dishes, made of Heaven only knows what. Well, when the nobility and gentry can get such fare as this, and find such clean inns, with all the linen smelling of lavender, and the floors without a speck on 'em, it is a wonder to me how they can make up their minds to stop a year in Italy or France. Talk of the climate, indeed! why, I'd rather by far have the skies a little cloudy, and feel a little chilly, than have my eyes everlastingly dazzled by the sun, and my body parched by the heat, as in Italy. Then the blessing of a good seacoal fire!—there is nothing like it in the world—instead of wood blazing and fizzing, and wanting replenishing every half hour or so. And then think of the pleasure of being known and respected!—where in all Italy or France would Mrs. Sydney and our young lady find a welcome like what they met with here from Mrs. Mappleton, or where could we meet with such respect and attention? No, no, give me old England, and I never want to see foreign parts again; I have had enough of them, that I have."

As Mrs. Sydney and Louisa sat conversing in the twilight, the sound of an Æolian harp, awakened by

the freshening of the evening breeze, stole on their ears. It touched the hearts of both, and as they listened to its low, wild wailing, that resembles a requiem to the dead, tears chased each other down their cheeks, and neither was sorry that the effects of the melancholy excited by this most unearthly of all music were concealed by the shades of night. Mrs. Sydney's thoughts were with the dead. Often had she, with her husband, listened to similar sounds, which he greatly liked; nay, in the very chamber in which she was now seated, many years ago, they had sat together in the twilight, and left off conversing to listen to the same mournful music. Years, long years, had since then passed over her head; yet so freshly did the sweet and fitful aërial sounds which were now stealing along the chords bring the past before her, that it seemed but as yesterday since she had last heard the same music with *him* who had so long been sleeping in the tomb. Louisa's thoughts, though *not* of the dead, had more of bitterness in them than those of her mother. Mrs. Sydney had the heart-soothing conviction that he whom she had so truly mourned, and still remembered with such tenderness, had died, loving her as fondly as on the day he called her bride; and the blessed hope that, when summoned from this earth, she would be re-united to him in that better world where no more partings are; while her daughter

mourned over the most cruel disappointment of the heart, the falsehood of *one* in whom she had garnered up her whole affection, her every hope of earthly happiness, and who, though alive, was as if dead to her. How often had she pictured to herself the return to her ancestral home, accompanied by Strathern!—and now she was journeying to it without him, with injured health and broken spirits—the present nearly insupportable to her, and the future clouded. How fair a fabric of happiness, based on confiding love, had she raised! O! why had perfidy and falsehood dashed it to the earth!

The pensive reveries of both mother and daughter were interrupted by the entrance of their good hostess, Mrs. Mappleton, bearing on a tray covered with a snowy napkin two small china bowls filled with curds and whey, in the preparation of which she was allowed to excel.

"I have taken the liberty, ladies, of bringing you something that you, dear madam, used formerly to make me vain by praising, and which this dear young lady used to like when she was quite a baby."

"Thanks, good Mrs. Mappleton; and, though we had not intended to have anything before going to bed, we will certainly taste your delicious curds and whey," replied Mrs. Sydney.

"Ah, madam! how time flies! The old proverb says, 'weeds of grace grow apace,' and surely Miss

Sydney has grown into a charming young lady. It seems but yesterday since I saw her a beautiful baby in Nurse Murray's arms. Right glad will all the country be, madam, to hear of your returning to Sydney Park. Often and often has your absence been regretted, though never blamed; for every one knew that delicacy of health, and not a desire to live away from your own country, was the cause of your absence. You will find the neighbourhood greatly changed, madam, and not for the better, I am sorry to say. Some noble families, and of the old stock, too, half-ruined, and gone abroad to retrench—gaming, madam, and horse-racing the cause of all. What a pity it is that there is not a law made to prevent noblemen and gentlemen from beggaring themselves and their children by such evil courses! Oh! madam, it was enough to make one's heart ache to attend the sales that have taken place in this and the neighbouring county,—to see the noble pictures and statues, that have descended from father to son through generations, and which used to draw company on show-days from many a mile's distance, taken from the walls and pedestals, where they were placed for more than a century, and brought to the hammer, exposed to the gaze and remarks of London picture-dealers and Jews, who cared no more for them than just what profit they might gain by buying and selling them again. And to think how proud the

elderly housekeepers used to be of showing the same pictures and statues to visitors, when humble folk, like myself and many of my neighbours, would hardly venture to speak above our breath in those grand rooms and galleries, when allowed to walk through them on show-days; and then to see them filled with low, vulgar-looking men, that in former times would not be allowed to go into the stewards' or housekeepers' rooms, seeming quite at their ease, with their hats on their heads, in apartments where the noblest in the land, and even royalty itself, were used to be! And to hear their low jokes where a coarse word was never before uttered! Oh! madam, it was indeed a sad sight; and, as I saw those fine things bought by such people, and taken to be placed, God knows where, I thought of what must be the feelings of shame and regret of the late owners, and how it must hurt them to look in the faces of their sons and heirs, after having, by their gaming and racing, dismantled the dwellings that ought to have descended to them, as they had done from father to son, through generation to generation. It seemed to me, madam, that the very pictures and statues looked ashamed and sorrowful at falling into such new hands. And the plate, too, madam, the fine massive gold and silver plate, with the family arms, off which kings and queens have been known to eat, handled by dirty hands, and weighed out like mere common gold or

silver! The christening-fonts, too, used at the baptism of scores of noble infant heirs, now sold to be melted down; and the rich furniture, that was made expressly to fit every part in the house, sold piecemeal, to be scattered about to whoever might wish to buy it! Ah! madam, such a sight was enough to cure any gamester or horse-racer from ever playing or betting; but they seldom attend sales — indeed, few noblemen do—they employ Jew brokers to buy for them. But, bless me, madam, I fear I have tired you with my gossip; I forgot how late it is."

CHAPTER XL.

That man ne'er is, but hopes still to be blest,
An axiom is, by all mankind confess'd;
Its truth, if we look round us, we must own
In every lot, as well as ours, is shown;
See where Dame Fortune gives unbounded wealth,
Hygeia oft denies the boon of health.
Or if the two propitious deign to prove,
Then comes to vex, the wily archer, Love;
With such a host of torments in his train,
That Fortune and Hygeia's gifts are vain
To soothe the pangs his victims must endure,
Until the despot smiles and yields a cure.

A few days after the departure of Mrs. and Miss Sydney from Como, a letter from the Marquis of Roehampton reached his son. Lord and Lady Delmington, with Strathern, were seated at the breakfast-table when the letters were delivered, and the former no sooner recognised the handwriting of his stern

father than he changed colour, and, taking it up, retired to his own chamber to peruse it. The fond wife had noticed the change in her husband's countenance, and would have followed him, but Strathern urged her to remain and wait until Lord Delmington either sent for her or returned. It was painful to witness her emotion.

"I fear, Mr. Strathern," said she, "that I have been much to blame in yielding to the solicitation of my beloved Francis in becoming his wife without the sanction of his father. Had he been in good health, dearly, fondly as I love him, I think I should have had firmness enough to resist his entreaties; but to see him depart alone, ill and wretched as he was, was more than I could bear, though, ever since I learned the sternness and severity of his father, I have accused myself for having clandestinely entered into a family who will, it is but too probable, repudiate me, and, what is infinitely more important, this step may draw down on my adored husband the everlasting displeasure of his parent. Oh! should this occur, and my fears tell me it is but too likely, I shall never pardon myself."

Tears filled the beautiful eyes of Lady Delmington, though Strathern endeavoured to give her hopes that, however the Marquis of Rochampton might, under the first impulse of anger and disappointment, resent

his son's marriage, time and reflection would reconcile him to that which was now irrevocable, and all might end happily. The youthful and inexperienced are ever prone to encourage hope; and as Lady Delmington listened to Strathern, bright visions of reconciliation, and future happiness based on it, once more filled her breast, and as she wiped away her tears she exclaimed, "Should the Marquis of Roehampton pardon this first and only fault of his son, my whole life shall be devoted to prove my gratitude. O, Mr. Strathern! how often have I wished that my dear husband, instead of being born to high rank and large possessions, had come of no higher lineage than my own, and had no brighter prospects than a moderate competency, for I feel that I am not fitted to the elevated station to which his love has raised me, and I have no greater ambition than to live in a happy seclusion with him."

The innocence and simplicity of Lady Delmington, which formed such striking and attractive characteristics in her, vouched for the truth of her *naïve* avowal, and Strathern sighed as he reflected on the stern and unbending nature of the Marquis of Roehampton, which offered so little ground for hope that such a daughter-in-law would ever be acceptable to him. No, some high-born dame, with a *hauteur* and *fierté* like his own, who would bring to the family genealogical

tree, of which he was so proud, a fresh branch of ancient nobility, was what he desired, and even though she might possess no one fine or endearing quality to render his son's life happy, *he* would have preferred her to the most lovely and amiable of the whole sex who boasted not of noble birth, and would have deemed his son weak and unreasonable if such a wife did not content him.

After an hour's absence, Lord Delmington entered the room. He was even more pale than usual, and though he endeavoured to smile as his wife approached and laid her hand on his arm, looking into his face with a glance of the deepest tenderness, the smile was but a faint and sickly one, and his lip quivered when he attempted to speak.

"I see it all, dearest," said his wife, turning pale as marble; "it is all my fault."

"No, my own love. Do not regret having made me the happiest of men. Were it to be done over again, I would on my knees implore you, as I did then, to become mine; to give me a motive to seek the preservation of a life that, without you, would have been valueless; and, if length of days were denied me, to soothe those that remained. No day passes, my beloved, that I do not thank—that I do not bless you—for having yielded to my prayers. Do not, therefore, repent having given yourself to me, for to

my latest hour I will be grateful for the happiness you have conferred on me."

There was an earnestness and pathos in the tones of Lord Delmington's voice that profoundly touched those who listened to him. His wife, the tears streaming down her cheeks, fell on his breast, to which he fondly pressed her, and Strathern moved towards the door to withdraw.

"Don't leave us, my dear friend," said Lord Delmington, "for we have need of your counsel. My father is obdurate. He wrote, under the impulse of violent anger, a letter which I will hope that, had he reflected coolly, he would not have addressed to an only son, so weak in health as I am. But let that pass. That no eye save mine should see that harsh and unkind letter, I have destroyed it. A time may come when *he* will regret having written it. In the mean time, he tells me that while he lives I am not to look to him for a maintenance. In short"—and here the ingenuous countenance of Lord Delmington became flushed up to the temples—"I am for the present a beggar."

"No, my dear Delmington; not while I have a fortune, which, thanks to Providence, is far more than my wants or wishes require," replied Strathern. "You must allow me to be your banker until your father relents, which be assured ere long will be the

case. I only offer that which I am fully persuaded, under similar circumstances, you would do to me; and I shall doubt the sincerity of your friendship if you hesitate to accept my offer."

"You see, my beloved," exclaimed Lord Delmington, "how every misfortune has its compensation. Had not my father behaved unkindly, I might never have known the generosity and devotion of my friend; and yet, even without this last proof, be assured, my dear Strathern, that I counted on you as on a brother. I accept, with the same frankness and good faith with which you offered it, the pecuniary aid of which I shall stand in need until my father forgives the only step I ever could have taken against his wishes. Henceforth I will become your pensioner, and owe you the support a parent denies me."

"You must follow no niggardly system of misplaced economy, my dear Delmington. Remember that I am rich, have not a debt in the world, and that your health and comfort, as well as that of Lady Delmington, greatly depend on the enjoyment of those things termed luxuries by the sordid, but which are indispensable to persons of delicate health."

"You will find me an unblushing debtor, my dear friend," said Lord Delmington, and he shook his friend's hand, while a look of gratitude from his fair

and gentle wife repaid Strathern for all the interest he took in this youthful and amiable pair.

"Yes," said he to himself, as, an hour after this scene, he walked alone on the bank of the beautiful lake, on the precise spot where he had brought Louisa Sydney, when he had rescued her from a watery grave, and which, in spite of all his resolution to think of her no more, he found himself returning to more than once every day,—"Yes, to be loved as Delmington is, what sacrifice would I not make? O, Louisa! had you but felt towards me one half the tenderness which animates the breast of Lady Delmington for her husband, I should have been the happiest of men, instead of being, as now, the most wretched! The sight of their happiness increases my misery by reminding me of that which I hoped to enjoy. Would that I could chase her image from my breast! Oh! the humiliation of thinking always of one who flies my hated presence, and who, if she ever bestows a thought on me, indulges only one of scorn and dislike. Incomprehensible woman! what have I done to forfeit the affection she professed for me? That she *did* love me I can no more doubt than that I am now standing on the spot whence I sprang to save her—on the spot to which I bore her, when, believing her to be dead, I felt that death shared with her would be preferable to life without her. Faith-

less, cruel Louisa! you know not the pangs your desertion of me have inflicted, or you, even cold and unrelenting as you are, would vouchsafe some pity for him whose destiny you once promised to share! Would that I knew where you now are, for this ignorance of the abode of one whose image fills my heart, and occupies every thought, is insupportable! And yet what would it avail me to know where you are? Conscious as I am that were I to seek the poor consolation of even breathing the same air, you would fly from the spot, and deny me even this slight comfort."

While Strathern was giving way to these sad reflections, Lord and Lady Delmington were differently employed. She had for some time indulged the hope of becoming a mother, a hope that filled her heart with delight, and which had been avowed to her lord, as she hid her beautiful face on his breast, but now came the conviction that her hopes would not be disappointed, and, although faint and suffering, her joy was great; nor was that of her doting husband less.

"Yes, my own love," exclaimed he, as he fondly embraced her; "this event cannot fail to touch my father's heart, and if the Almighty will vouchsafe to us a son, he will relent, and all will be well. Now that *I* have the prospect of becoming a father, I feel

more than ever disposed to turn with dutiful affection to mine."

"Heaven grant, dearest Francis, that it may be a boy! Oh! how I shall adore it, if it should resemble you!"

"But should it be a girl, my beloved Mary, we must not be disappointed," replied Lord Delmington; "and I am sure if it should be like its dear mother, I shall love it quite as well, nay, perhaps better, than if it were a boy."

"No, not better, Francis, don't say better, or I shall be jealous for our little son—pray Heaven that we may have one!"

Notwithstanding that Lord Delmington affected to make light of the cruel letter he had received from his father, and to encourage the hope in his wife that the birth of his child might induce a speedy reconciliation, he was far from feeling the hope which he expressed to her; and while endeavouring to assume a cheerful aspect in her presence, his mind was a prey to anxiety and gloomy forebodings, which not even the prospect of becoming a father could vanquish. He found himself frequently relapsing into thoughtfulness, from which he would cheer up when he noticed the eyes of his doting wife fixed on his face with an expression of deep anxiety; but the effort to appear gay was not a successful one, and she marked it with

deep pain and increased tenderness at this new proof of his delicacy and affection. Yet there were moments, and they were neither few nor far between, when Lady Delmington, amid all the happiness of reciprocated love, and joyful hope of becoming a mother, bitterly regretted having drawn on her husband the paternal anger which, in spite of all his efforts to conceal it, weighed but too heavily on him. Every change in his countenance which indicated anxiety or melancholy awakened a self-reproach in her breast; and though she carefully concealed it from him, lest the knowledge that the sacrifice which he had made had not secured her happiness any more than his own, might add to his chagrin, there nevertheless were moments when, escaped from his presence, her tears would flow bitterly at the thought that, but for his love for her, her dear Francis, so deserving of every blessing, would be free from the remorse of having offended his father.

Lady Delmington judged of her husband's father by her own, the kindest and most amiable of men, whom to have angered she felt would have made her wretched. She could not comprehend that her dear and gentle Francis, so calculated to conciliate as well as to feel affection, could have found in his only parent but a harsh and severe mentor, and a stern and unrelenting judge; hence she exaggerated the advantages he had

resigned in allying himself to her, and pictured to herself a happiness in the paternal mansion which her husband had in reality never enjoyed there since the death of his excellent mother. A desire of not alarming her had prevented Lord Delmington from ever dwelling on the sternness and severity of the Marquis of Roehampton; hence she believed that remorse for having grieved a kind parent, and not a dread of the continued obduracy of a morose one, was the cause of the anxiety that paled the cheek and subdued the spirits of her husband. Had Lord Delmington found a parent like the one his young and inexperienced wife imagined his to be, he would have been one of the most dutiful as well as affectionate of sons, but the unbending *hauteur* and cold sternness of Lord Roehampton had destroyed all his son's confidence in his affection; and when he saw himself, an only child, in a state of health that must have alarmed any one interested in his existence, suffered to leave England, without his father offering to accompany him, or even betraying the least pity or forbearance towards him, when suffering under the first trial of disappointed love, he felt that ambition alone, of which he was to be made the tool, was the only tie that bound his father to him.

This conviction had hitherto precluded remorse for having offended him, but not even the severity of his

letter—and it was couched in terms the most cutting and insulting—could prevent this good-hearted young man from now lamenting that he had given pain to his parent. This change in his feelings had been effected by the anticipation of becoming himself a father; and had at this epoch one line of kindness from the Marquis of Roehampton reached him, his heart, touched to almost womanly tenderness towards his wife and the child with which he hoped she would soon bless him, would have melted towards his father. "Did *he*, could he, have felt as I now do, on first hearing from my mother that he was likely soon to be a father?" thought Lord Delmington. "Did *he* watch her every movement, every change of countenance, as I do, my sweet Mary's, and doat on the mother of his future child, if possible more than on the bride when first she blessed his arms, as I do! Oh! no, he did not, he could not, or never would he have treated me with the coldness and severity that has marked his conduct towards me from my childhood. I can call to mind no moments of paternal endearment, no mild counsel. I have ever felt as an unwelcome intruder in his house; and now, not content with banishing me from his presence, and declaring that he no longer considers me as a son, he insults and wounds me in the tenderest point, by

heaping the most unmerited reproaches on the sole being on whom my happiness depends."

Such were the painful reflections that assailed Lord Delmington, and empoisoned the peace that, blessed with the devoted love of his amiable wife, would have been his, had his father acted towards him with common kindness, or even forbearance. His health, always delicate, became still more so, and his physicians, observing the change, and attributing it to the air of Como not being suited to him, advised his removing to the south of Italy. Strathern arranged that he should henceforth be the banker of his friend, and urged him to be in no way sparing of his purse, repeatedly assuring him that he was rich enough to enable *him* to support the most liberal expenditure, without in the least interfering with his own wants, or even luxuries. This generosity on the part of Strathern, forming so strong a contrast to the conduct of his father, greatly touched Lord Delmington, who felt that, without the interposition of his kind friend, he and his wife would have been placed in the most painful and embarrassing circumstances, in a foreign land. To owe their very subsistence to a friend, with so remote a chance of repaying the pecuniary part of the obligation, was annoying, if not humiliating, and to be reduced to this alternative by a father possessed

of unbounded wealth increased the chagrin which was preying on his mind, and tended to destroy the chance of his recovery from the insidious malady which it seemed evident was making its slow but sure progress on his constitution. It was agreed that Lord and Lady Delmington should proceed by easy journeys to Leghorn, secure a villa in its immediate neighbourhood, there to await her accouchement, whence they could proceed by sea to Naples, and Strathern determined on returning to England.

How far this determination was caused by the belief entertained by him that Louisa Sydney had bent her course thither, we will not venture to guess, but certain it was that she was seldom an hour absent from his thoughts, and his heart yearned again to behold her, or even to have the consolation of inhabiting the same country with her. He therefore resisted all the pleadings of Lord Delmington to accompany him to Leghorn; and on the day that he, Lady Delmington, and their physician left Como, *en route* for that place, Strathern set out on his journey to England. The parting of the friends was a sad one, for a presentiment that they should meet no more on earth haunted the mind of Lord Delmington. His increasing languor and debility but too well justified this presentiment, and the sadness which it engendered was calculated to help to accomplish the

mournful presage. Strathern, although cheered by the sanguine hope held out by the physician, that his patient would, with care and a good climate, be yet restored to health, took leave of his friend with regret, and when he clasped his fevered hand, was more than half disposed to abandon his own projects, and accompany him to Naples. But the dread of this sudden change in his plan alarming the invalid, prevented his carrying it into execution, and he pursued his journey to England, indulging fond but undefined hopes, all terminating in one focus—namely, the seeing or learning tidings of Louisa.

Had he questioned himself as to the solidity of the foundation on which the hopes he built for the future were based, Strathern's reason would have whispered to him that it was unstable as sand moved by the waves of ocean; but when did a true lover permit himself to analyze the grounds of the hope that cheers, or doubt the syren whose smile enables him to bear the present, and look forward without gloom to the future? There were moments, it is true, when his spirits drooped, and he doubted the wisdom of his so soon returning to England. Pride whispered that he would be suspected of following her who fled from him, and this somewhat galled his proud spirit; but love silenced the whispers of pride, and then prudence reminded him that it was time for him to

see to the completion of his new house, and to make arrangements for the placing in it those fine works of art he had purchased in Italy. It was at the close of evening, when twilight threw its shadowy curtain around, that sad and gloomy thoughts most triumphed over Strathern, and clouded his view of the future with despondency. Who is it that at such an hour has not felt the influence of the departing day so beautifully described by Dante?—

> "Era già l'ora, che volge 'l disio,
> A' naviganti, e'intenerisce il cuore,
> Lo di, ch' han detto a' dolci amici Addio:
> E che lo nuovo peregrin d'amore
> Punge, se ode squilla di lontano,
> Che paja 'l giorno pianger, che si muore."

This pensiveness is experienced on land as well as on sea, as Strathern found; and when at early morn the sun illumined the landscape, lending a golden radiance to every object around, he felt his spirits cheered, and hope revived within his lately desponding breast, he acknowledged that those who have cause for regret should avoid travelling in the twilight hour, and choose the bright morning and cheerful day for their wayfaring. Louisa Sydney would have believed in the power of sympathy had she seen with what anxiety her lover turned over the leaves of the books

in which the names of travellers are registered at the different inns where he halted, that he might trace her route; and, when he beheld her name, he would pause to admire the delicate penmanship, and press it to his lips. And yet—oh, strange delusion! — this was the lover whose affection she doubted, and whose truth she disbelieved! As Strathern drew nearer to the goal to which his wishes pointed — to that England, less dear to him as his native land than as being the place of her abode—his hopes diminished, and he asked himself why he had ever been so weak as to indulge them. Had he not had the most irrefragable proofs of her obduracy — of her refusal even to reveal to him how he had offended?—and yet, after all this, he had been so blinded by his passion as to entertain a hope that his coming to England might lead to some favourable result. When, however, he touched his native shore, and reflected that no sea now rolled between him and the object of his affection — that the air he breathed was the same which she respired, and that a few brief hours might, if she permitted it, bring him to her presence—his spirits became elated, and he rejoiced that he had come home.

Arrived in London, he took up his abode at the Clarendon Hotel. How he longed to discover whether Mrs. Sydney and her daughter were in town, and pondered over the best mode of ascertaining this

intelligence! Where was he to inquire? Who should he ask? He suffered the waiter to present the *menu* for his dinner three times before he was aware of his presence, so wholly occupied was his mind in thinking whether Louisa was or was not in town; and when dinner was served he rendered but little justice to the excellent *cuisine* for which the Clarendon is so remarkable, his anxiety so wholly destroyed his appetite. This last effect of a *passion malheureuse* may, in our degenerate days, be received as a rare and indubitable proof of true love—so rare that some might question the fact, for few are they who allow the wants of the heart to influence the cravings of the stomach, as may be proved by witnessing the young men of our time at the tables of the Amphitryons where they dine on all the delicacies of the season, or at their clubs, where they abuse the cooks for not having provided them. No, dinner is a weighty affair with them, and she must be indeed peerless, who could prevent them from seriously applying themselves to it, with all the *savoir* in the *science de bouche*, for which our *jeunes gens* are no less remarkable than for their power of eating. Strange, however, as the example may be, it was nevertheless a fact, that ever since the unaccountable rupture with Louisa, Strathern's appetite had lost its zest, a circumstance which was revealed by his having grown thin and pale of late.

When his late dinner was removed, and that he had skimmed over the evening papers while sipping his coffee, he bethought himself of going to the Opera. "Fond of Italian music as Louisa is, she will be sure, if in London, to be there," thought Strathern, "and I may have the happiness of gazing from a distance on that lovely face which I must not nearer approach." His heart beat quicker as he entered the theatre which he hoped might contain her. By the aid of gold, he was shown to a private box, when, having ensconced himself behind one of the curtains, he directed his glass in search of the only fair face he wished to behold. Over how many handsome ones did his eye hastily glance, no one among them having the power to detain it for a moment, when he found that it appertained not to her he sought!

All Englishmen who have been some time absent from their country are struck when they return to it by the blaze of beauty that breaks on their sight when they first visit any place of public amusement; but at the Italian Opera, more than at any other theatre, does this strike one, for the full dress, in which it is the custom for ladies to appear there, develops their charms to greater advantage, and each box looks like the window of some *millionaire* flower fancyist, who had placed in it the choicest treasures of his parterre, so fair, blooming, and fresh are the youthful and lovely creatures to be seen around.

But Strathern heeded them not. What to him were these young and radiant beauties, when he sought only, thought only, of one, and her well-remembered face no where met his view? Even the music, admirable as it was, failed to charm his ear; and the dulcet notes of Grisi, the all-perfect science of Persiani, the heart-thrilling tones of Rubini, and the splendid voice of the great Padre Lablache, for once were heard with indifference. He reconnoitred from the other side of the theatre every box on the opposite side; but his search was vain, and he returned to that which he had secured, merely because he dreaded a solitary evening at his hotel still more than the crowded solitude he was in. When, however, the ballet commenced, the brisk music and rapid evolutions of the *déesse de la dance* who opened it were so little in accord with his feelings, that he arose and left the house at the moment that a deafening shout of bravas proclaimed the triumph of the graceful and elegant Taglioni, and the delight of those who witnessed it.

"What is it you, indeed?" demanded Mr. Rhymer, laying his hand on the arm of Strathern, who was passing quickly along without having observed him. "Why, who expected to meet you here? and yet nothing is so natural; for I learnt, not a very long time ago, that a certain fair lady, in whom you

take a more than common interest, had been in London, though neither her mother nor her fair self had condescended to inform me of their arrival. They remained, as I heard, but a very short time in London, and went down to their country-seat, for which I take for granted you are *en route*, for you look *affairé*. You are a fortunate man. I suppose it is a useless compliment to ask you to stay a day in town to dine with me? Good night!"

CHAPTER XLI.

O Fortune! ever mutable and vain,
That lov'st to make poor mortals still thy sport,
When once thy fickle smiles begin to wane,
How soon the world forgets to pay its court
Where erst the herd, with smooth and fawning mien,
Came offering friendship that it did but feign!
'Tis then we learn our real friends to know,
And false and selfish summer ones to fly,
And gladly from the fluttering crowd we go
In some calm solitude to rest, and die;
For knowledge of that world which look'd so fair
When Fortune smiled, is apt to breed despair.

It was on one of those lovely evenings that follow a sultry day sometimes granted to us in our uncertain climate, and the more highly appreciated from their rarity, that Mrs. Sydney and her daughter approached Sydney Park. Short as had been the notice of their intended arrival, the tenants and dependants had collected; the former, in their best clothes and mounted, rode

forth to the next post town to meet the carriage, and the latter prepared to take the horses from it, and to draw it themselves. The ladies were both much touched at this proof of attachment and joy at their return, but so firmly yet kindly declined the last measure, that it was at length abandoned, and, escorted by the horsemen, and followed by those on foot, they proceeded to their home.

The delicious freshness of the air, the bright verdure of the park, with its stately and umbrageous trees throwing their giant branches far around, and their foliage feathering down to the grass—the timid deer, alarmed by the unusual sound of the cheers that welcomed their owner, starting off to their coverts—the lowing kine laving their legs in the limpid river that wound through the park, spanned by a beautiful bridge of a single arch, presented so charming a landscape as they entered the lofty gate, that both mother and daughter acknowledged that they had seen nothing to compete with it in their travels. A startled hare occasionally crossed the road, and innumerable blackbirds and thrushes were hopping about, and sending forth their notes, as if to join in the general welcome. Every turn of the smooth and even road presented some new and attractive view, until the fine old mansion stood revealed. The setting sun had tinged all its windows with his golden beams,

and gave a roseate hue to the flag which floated from the stately dome in the centre, to announce the presence of the mistress of these wide domains.

A procession of about fifty girls, clothed in their holiday suits, and headed by their schoolmistress and her assistant, were drawn up on one side of the approach to the house to greet their benefactress; for these children had all been educated and clothed at the expense of Mrs. and Miss Sydney, and about the same number of boys, with their schoolmaster and his assistant, were ranged on the opposite side. The hearts of both mother and daughter were touched. Louisa, for the first time, felt the responsibility as well as the proud sense of proprietorship swell her heart, as she beheld the glowing landscape, the stately home, and the vast number of those who looked to her for maintenance. She felt that, as mistress of this noble place and large fortune, she had many duties to perform—that from where much is bestowed much is expected—and though a pang did shoot through her heart, as the thought crossed her of how much more she would have been delighted with all she now witnessed, were *he*, with whom she once believed she was to have shared her possessions, with her, she made an effort to quell it, and to think only of contributing to the happiness of others, however she might despair of securing her own.

How differently do things appear when viewed from a distance, in the mind's eye, or in reality! Although Louisa had often pictured to herself her reception whenever she should return to her ancestral home, the actual scene before her far surpassed the anticipated one. She felt that she must no longer, as hitherto, live for herself alone; that her tenants and dependants had strong claims upon her; and that a great, a serious responsibility was attached to her position. She remembered that she possessed a dear, kind, and judicious guide for the fulfilment of those duties in her beloved mother, and turned to embrace and welcome her home, but she started when she found her cheeks wet from the contact with those of her parent, who, pointing to the spire of the church seen through the trees, whispered—"*There*, my child, repose those blessed ones who would have welcomed us, had the Almighty been pleased to spare them to us; and *there* we, too, my Louisa, will be called away from all that now charms your eyes, and draws tears from mine. *I* have witnessed similar scenes of rejoicing for the return of your dear father, whose presence never failed to diffuse joy and happiness around, and this one brought back to me, my child, the memory of other days. Oh! may every blessing attend my darling in the home of her fathers!" and Mrs. Sydney drew her daughter to her

breast, and smiled through her tears, as she fondly pressed her to it.

The ladies alighted, and, Louisa supporting her mother, ascended the flight of steps that led to the noble portico of the mansion. Shouts of joy rent the air, and "Long live Mrs. and Miss Sydney!" was uttered by all around. The ladies had smiles and nods for all, not even the humblest were disregarded; and as they entered the lofty vestibule, around which fine statues and beautiful marble vases, filled with rare and blooming flowers, were ranged, they felt that they were indeed at home. There stood the venerable housekeeper, dressed in her choicest silk gown, and her finest laced cap, with her huge bunch of shining keys attached to her side, curtseying and smiling, and behind her were the female domestics, in their best clothes. The grey-headed butler was at the head of the men servants, in their handsome liveries, bowing, and hoping the ladies were not very much fatigued. The apartments, filled with flowers, and beautifully clean and bright, testified the care and attention bestowed on their preservation, for the mirrors and furniture looked like new.

Louisa felt an almost childish delight in wandering from room to room, and looking on the various treasures of art and *vertu* which they contained, while her mother stood before the portraits of her husband and

son, gazing on those fondly-loved and well-remembered features, so often present in her dreams, and seldom absent from her waking thoughts. A small but *recherché* dinner was served in the *salle-à-manger*, consisting of the dishes most preferred by Mrs. Sydney, whose taste neither the housekeeper nor cook had forgotten. Iced water, clear and sparkling as crystal, attested that the good old butler remembered her partiality for that beverage, and fruits of the most delicious flavour served at the dessert, forced both ladies to acknowledge that the products of English hothouses surpass the growth of southern climes. Nor were the tenants or poor neglected. Both were regaled with an abundant supply of substantial viands and strong ale, provided by the forethought of the house-steward, butler, and housekeeper, and cakes and syllabubs furnished forth a feast for the children.

"There is nothing like home, dear mother," said Louisa Sydney, as they sipped their tea in the small drawing-room late that evening. "I had almost forgotten Sydney Park, and never thought it so beautiful as I now find it. How fresh, how green is the park, and how different from the parched and scanty herbage of Italy! How magnificent are the trees, with all their leafy honours, and how they gain by a comparison with the dried, burnt, and meagre foliage of the country we have left! Then the cleanliness, the good order,

that pervades this house—the air of mingled elegance and perfect comfort that reigns around; is it not delightful? I feel as if I should never wish to leave my home, but wear out the even tenor of my life in this calm and beautiful abode—

'The world forgetting, by the world forgot.'"

Louisa Sydney's slumbers that night were less broken and more refreshing than any she had lately known, and she awoke next morning with calmer feelings, and a desire for occupation never experienced since the fatal evening when the faithlessness of her lover had been revealed to her at the Coliseum. When she opened her window, and looked out on the beautiful prospect it commanded, over woods and groves, hills and dales, with the rapid and silvery river that wound through the velvet-like lawn in front, and the flowery meads at a distance, with the azure mountains that bounded the horison, her eye wandered with delight over the enchanting view, and she murmured to herself, "All this fair scene is mine. Why, possessor of it, does my ungrateful heart still sigh for one blessing which, unattained, renders all others unavailing in securing my happiness?" The dew of early morn still sparkled on the leaves, and shone like diamonds on the blooming flowers in the parterre, and the birds carolled forth their hymns of praise to HIM who had created

this beautiful earth, and all the wonders it contains. Who that has listened to the sweet notes of these tuneful choristers of the grove but must have felt that, more grateful than man, they pass their brief lives in giving forth songs of joy, while *he*, but too often regardless of the good provided for him, walks through scenes of soul-stirring beauty, which ought to awaken the liveliest sense of pleasure, with clouded brow and thankless heart, dwelling only on grovelling cares and worldly occupations! Louisa Sydney gazed long on the scene before her; and, her spirit soothed by the contemplation of its tranquil beauty, she wondered how she had ever so far forgotten its attractions, as to remain so long an exile from it.

For some days, her time was spent in exploring the cool and sequestered purlieus of the park and noble gardens. So well had they been attended to during the long absence of her mother and herself, that even her fastidious taste found nothing to correct; and art had so judiciously identified itself with nature, that their union produced the happiest effect. Louisa rejoiced that the London season detained the neighbouring nobility and gentry from their seats, and left her and her mother free from the routine of visits and dinner-parties, to which, under her present state of mind, she felt an insuperable objection, yet from which she would have found it difficult to extricate herself

without giving offence. She now, guided by the experience of her mother, entered on those duties always entailed by the possession of a large fortune; and, in the constant occupation which they afforded, she found the best relief for the sad thoughts of the past, which would but too frequently intrude on her mind. Mrs. Sydney was highly gratified in observing the desire evinced by her daughter to render her dependants happy, and the activity with which she carried into execution every project calculated to benefit them. Health again began to tinge the pale face and to sparkle in the dark eyes of the lovely Louisa, the happy result of pure air and constant exercise; and, although sighs would sometimes agitate her breast, there was less of sadness in it than the fond mother had dared to hope for from thrice the time that they had passed at Sydney Park.

A few weeks after Mr. Wandsworth arrived, and his countenance, usually remarkable for its cheerfulness, struck Mrs. Sydney with a vague sense of alarm. There was a constraint, too, in his manner, so different from its general open frankness, that it confirmed the undefined fear his grave aspect had excited in her mind, and rendered her nervous and impatient to learn the cause.

"Something disagreeable has, I am sure, occurred," observed she, when, having led him into the library,

where he expressed a desire to converse with her alone, she sank into a chair.

"Why, yes, my dear madam," replied Mr. Wandsworth, "my visit here *is* connected with a painful business—one that will require all your fortitude and patience to bear, and I trust to the exercise of both to no ordinary extent to prepare Miss Sydney for the unexpected and severe trial that awaits her."

"Good heavens! Mr. Wandsworth, what do you —what *can* you mean? Pray do not keep me a moment longer in suspense, but let me at once learn the worst."

"Painful, indeed, is the task imposed on me; nevertheless, it must be fulfilled. Know, then, that your daughter's right to this estate, to the whole fortune which she inherits from her father, is more than questioned—is denied—and that the next heir-at-law claims it on the plea of the invalidity of the process had recourse to by her grandfather when he made the last settlement of the estates, entailing them on his female descendants in case of the want of male issue."

Mrs Sydney listened in breathless silence. Not a single exclamation broke from her lips, but an extreme paleness overspread her face, and she motioned with her head for Mr. Wandsworth to continue.

"You may well believe, madam, that I consulted

the first legal authorities on this momentous question, which I deferred laying before you while yet a hope existed in my breast that the claim set up by Mr. Sydney, of Sydney, was unjust; but grieved am I to say that the first lawyers in England, after a patient investigation of the case, and a strict scrutiny into the title-deeds, have agreed that Mr. Sydney is entitled to the estates, and that a trial in a court of law must terminate in our defeat."

"This is, indeed, an unexpected blow, Mr. Wandsworth, and falls heavily just as my daughter had learned to love this place, and to discharge the duties it entailed on her. Would that I had not returned here, for then this stroke of fortune would have been less severely felt! It is hard, very hard, to be driven from the home of her childhood, from a spot where the remembered virtues of her lamented father have acquired for her the affection which, in time, her own merit would have won; but it is useless to repine. We must bow with submission to His will who sees and ordains what is best for His creatures, and I am sure that my daughter will not hesitate a moment in delivering up a property to which another has the right without awaiting the issue of a trial. I will go and prepare her, and return to you in a short time."

Mrs. Sydney left Mr. Wandsworth highly impressed with the patience with which she submitted to the change

of fortune it had been his painful task to communicate to her. "Poor lady," thought he, "it must be hard for her to leave this place, endeared to her by the remembrance of all the happiness enjoyed in it during the life of her excellent husband. And the young lady, too, looked on as so rich an heiress! Well, well, who would have thought of such a reverse of fortune? What a noble place! It requires no slight degree of philosophy to resign it, even for a time, with fortitude. For a time," muttered he. "Yes, Heaven be thanked, it will not be for ever! With her youth and his advanced age, it will yet surely be hers. But I will not inform her of this: it would only render her unsettled and restless. Heiresses have such disadvantages to encounter, that Miss Sydney will be a gainer if she be led to believe that she has for ever lost this noble place. Yes; I will conceal the fact that she is next heir after Mr. Sydney, who cannot leave it from her." Such were the reflections of Mr. Wandsworth as he walked up and down the spacious library, now pausing to look around at the lofty bookcases, stored with the works of the best authors, and then glancing from the windows on the beautiful landscape they commanded.

Mrs. Sydney, not finding Louisa in her own room, sought her in the flower-garden, where her maid said she was to be found. With a beating heart and

trembling steps she approached her child, who no sooner saw her than she came up and joined her.

"I am so glad, dearest mother, that you are here, for I was wishing to consult you on an improvement I purpose making. Look what a beautiful view this rise in the grounds commands. What can be more lovely? Would it not be just the spot to erect a light pavilion where we might seek a refuge from the sun, or a sudden shower, and enjoy the noble prospect. Look here at the little sketch I have made. Don't you think this circular building, with the roof supported by Doric columns of white marble, would have a very good effect? I find my love for Sydney Park increase every day, and I intend, if you approve it, to add several embellishments to the grounds."

The heart of the fond mother felt a severe pang as she listened to these projects—projects never to be realised by her who uttered them—and she paused to collect sufficient force to reveal to her daughter the intelligence which weighed so heavily on her own spirits.

"You are silent, dearest mother," exclaimed Louisa, and she looked anxiously in the face of Mrs. Sydney. "You are pale, too. You must be ill, I am sure; let us hasten to the house;" and she drew her mother's arm through her own.

"I am not ill, my dear Louisa, but pained, agitated.

News of a very serious and distressing nature has reached me—news which nearly and gravely concerns you, my child."

"O! mother, speak, in pity speak. Strathern is ill, or worse—he is——," dead, she would have said, but the words died on her tongue, and she became pale as marble, and trembled violently.

"No, my Louisa; the news to which I referred did not relate to him."

"Heaven be praised!" ejaculated Louisa, clasping her hands together, and raising her eyes towards the sky, with a look of such intense thankfulness that Mrs. Sydney became more than ever convinced of the depth and unchangeable character of her attachment to Strathern.

"You do not inquire what is the bad news that has so pained me, my child?" asked Mrs. Sydney, after waiting a few minutes to give Louisa time to recover her self-command; but this required more than she had anticipated, for now that she was assured of the safety of her lover, she greatly regretted having exposed the state of her feelings with regard to him to her mother, and experienced a painful degree of embarrassment in her presence. "Have you no desire to know what I came to reveal to you?" demanded Mrs. Sydney.

"Yes, mother," replied Louisa, blushing deeply.

"Judge what my grief must be when I heard you, dearest, planning embellishments for a place, that, alas! no longer belongs to you."

And now Mrs. Sydney repeated to her daughter all the particulars communicated to her so short a time before by Mr. Wandsworth. Louisa listened in silence, and with a calmness her mother hardly hoped for; and when Mrs. Sydney had concluded her statement she observed, "Ah! mother, had this stroke of fortune been anticipated some months back, what a change might it have made in my destiny! It is hard to leave this beautiful place," and she paused and glanced around with tearful eyes; "but we must bear it as becomes those whose happiness does not depend on wealth. I am still rich in your affection, for *you* will not love your child less now that she no longer owns these wide domains than when you believed her to be a rich heiress. Henceforth, mother, I shall have a satisfaction hitherto denied me, namely, that of being assured that those who love me can be actuated by no mercenary motive, but love me for myself alone."

Even at this trying moment, when it was announced to her that she had lost a fortune, the possession of which she had only lately learned to enjoy, the heart of the woman yearning for affection, and filled with the desire of owing it wholly to her own personal

and mental qualities, found a consolation for a loss that would have plunged many of her sex in utter despair.

"Yes, my child," replied Mrs. Sydney, desirous of encouraging her daughter to find consolation in this unexpected source which now presented itself to her. "You certainly may *now* discard all suspicions of interested motives in those who profess to love you. Mr. Wandsworth will be agreeably surprised to find how well you bear this sudden stroke of adversity; so let us go to him at once. I believe we must leave this place with as little delay as possible."

"You are right, mother; it would not be proper for us to remain in a house that is no longer ours, and the present owner is not one to whom, from all I have heard of him, I should like to owe any obligation."

As the ladies proceeded towards the house, the head gardener, hat in hand, and lowly bowing, came up, and presenting a paper to Miss Sydney, said, "Here, madam, is the plan for the new parterre you wished to be laid out. Is it your pleasure to have the men set to work on it to-morrow?"

"No, Westman; let all the alterations I proposed be postponed for the present," replied Miss Sydney, and she moved on, leaving the gardener utterly surprised at this change in her intentions, as she had only

the previous day urged him to use the greatest expedition in carrying her plans into execution.

Mr. Wandsworth was indeed surprised when he saw the fortitude with which one so young, and nursed in the lap of fortune, bore the reverse which had so unexpectedly befallen her. His regret for her misfortune increased with the admiration her noble character excited in his mind, and deeply did he lament that he had still intelligence to impart which would add to the troubles of both mother and daughter. Not only was Mr. Sydney entitled to the whole of the estates hitherto believed to belong to Miss Sydney, but all the rents received since the death of her father, and appropriated to the payment of debts and mortgages incurred by her grandfather, an extravagant and improvident man, must now be refunded, and to do this would swallow up nearly the whole of Mrs. Sydney's private fortune, large as it was.

When this additional calamity was revealed to her she bore it with much less equanimity than did her daughter. To see her only child, on whom she so fondly doated, reduced at once from affluence to comparative poverty, was a trial beyond her power to support with courage in the first hour of affliction, and Mr. Wandsworth, seeing her grief, reminded her that she was not by law compelled to give up any por-

tion of her own private fortune to meet the claims of Mr. Sydney.

"Perhaps not by law," replied she, the blood mounting to her pale cheeks; "but if honour and honesty require this sacrifice, it shall be made. I fear not poverty for myself; but for my child," and the fond mother's lip trembled with emotion, "I confess I find it hard to bear."

Louisa embraced her parent, and whispered to her the soothing assurance that in a cottage, however humble, with her, she would be as contented as in the finest dwelling, and Mrs. Sydney smiled through her tears and pressed her to her heart. What a change had one day effected in the destiny of both mother and daughter! The morn had seen them in the possession of vast wealth and a home combining all that elegance and comfort could effect; the youthful heiress, busy in projects for embellishing still more highly this favoured spot, and rendering her dependants happy.

The evening found them with tearful eyes, and heavy hearts, oppressed with the sad consciousness that they were now unwelcome intruders in the house of another, whence they must go forth to seek an abode more suited to their fallen fortunes. How many tender memories crowded to the minds of both, as they glanced around on objects endeared to them

by long association, and to which they must so soon bid an eternal farewell. Mr. Wandsworth evinced the deepest interest and sympathy in their positions, and vowed within his own breast that every effort in his power should be made to serve them. He was well acquainted with the character of him to whom the noble fortune hitherto believed to appertain to Miss Sydney devolved. A man of sordid habits, devoted to amassing and hoarding wealth, which he had neither the taste nor desire to expend in any laudable pursuits, or generous hospitality, Mr. Sydney was regarded by all who knew him as a hard, selfish, and unfeeling miser, who would exact to the utmost farthing what the law decreed he had a right to. Vain would it be to make any appeal to him in favour of her so lately supposed to be the heiress of the wide domains now to become his. No; he would insist on having his rights, even though the refunding them might leave Mrs. and Miss Sydney in the most abject poverty; and, as Mr. Wandsworth reflected on this, he felt a more lively interest in the fate of both mother and daughter, who, soothed by his unobtrusive and respectful sympathy, determined to be guided by his advice, and to take no step without his approval of it.

They sought their pillow that night with little hope of finding that repose of which they both stood so much in need after a day of such overwhelming

troubles. And was this to be, indeed, the last night they were ever to pass beneath the roof where one had known the only happy days of her existence, and where the other had first opened her eyes on this chequered life? Their altered position appeared to them so like a troubled dream, that they were tempted again and again to question its reality, and when towards morning they sank into feverish and broken slumbers, their dreams were agitated by the events of the previous day, and they awoke unrefreshed and sorrowful.

Having pointed out to Mr. Wandsworth the few objects they wished to retain, among which the portraits of her husband and son were the most valuable, Mrs. Sydney and her daughter, attended by nurse Murray and one other female servant, with a male domestic, quitted Sydney Park. To avoid taking leave of those who would so bitterly lament their departure, they allowed the establishment to think that they were only to be absent for a short time, and with heavy hearts, and as much external composure as they could assume, they bade adieu to their late happy home. Mr. Wandsworth so warmly pressed them to accept the loan of his villa at Richmond for the present, urging, as an additional motive, the necessity of their being either in London, or its immediate neighbourhood, until all had been finally arranged with Mr. Syd-

ney, that they consented. He had always a small establishment at Thames Grove, the name of his villa, and having written to his housekeeper to apprise her of the guests she was to receive, he knew they might expect to find everything in order for their reception.

Both ladies were grateful for this kindness, for nothing could be more disagreeable to them than to find themselves in London at the present crisis; and when, late on the evening of the second day of their journey, they entered the picturesque and neatly-furnished dwelling lent to them, they were thankful that so much comfort was still accorded to them in their trouble.

CHAPTER XLII.

If rich, and in society you'd thrive,
  Play cards, your money lose, your temper keep;
And, though the greatest *parvenu* alive,
  You may ascend to fashion's dizzy steep:
For lords and ladies always wish to win,
And easy dupes are pardoned every sin.

Lord and Lady Wellerby and their daughters arrived at Naples a few days after the ill-assorted nuptials of the Marquis of Mountserrat, and were received by Lord Fitzwarren with a better grace than any of the family had anticipated, for, truth to tell, the father, mother, and sister, were as fully aware of the state of that nobleman's feelings as was the Lady Olivia, whom they most concerned, and who dreaded nothing so much as that he should fail to fulfil his engagement with her. They were, consequently, agreeably surprised by the good-natured if not warm reception they experienced at his hands, and Lady Olivia rose considerably higher

in their estimation as they saw the hour approach that would remove her from their jurisdiction, and elevate her to the peerage. Lady Sophia was the only person in the family who was not pleased, for she could not vanquish the envy she felt at the good fortune of her sister, and continued to give vent to it by the most depreciating remarks on him by whom she would gladly have been selected in place of her sister.

The *ennui* Lord Fitzwarren had experienced in the society of his *soi-disant* friend, Mr. Webworth, ever since that gentleman's health had given way under the effects of repletion, had reconciled him in some degree to the notion of the inevitable step he was about to take. "One thing is certain," thought he, "I never can be half so bored by Livy as I have been by Weby, and, after all, travelling by oneself is a very dull thing. A man must marry one time or another, and once over there is an end of it, so I don't funk half so much now that the thing draws near as I did when I first got my neck into the halter; and, when I see a good-looking young fellow like Mountserrat, and a marquis into the bargain, with a much larger fortune than mine—a fellow that might have married any girl he fancied—tied up to such a creature as he has wedded, I think myself devilish fortunate in making no worse a marriage than with Livy, who, though no beauty, is well enough in her way, and, moreover, is of suitable station

to my own in life. People can't say I have married beneath myself, or that there is anything ridiculous about her; so, after all, I don't see why I shouldn't put a good face on the matter, and make the best of it."

It was in consequence of this train of reasoning that Lord Fitzwarren met the Wellerby family in general, and his future bride in particular, with more cordiality than they or even the Lady Olivia herself had anticipated. He related to them the *ennui* to which he had been exposed during his journey from Venice with his friend Weby, a narration that drew forth not only the sympathy of Lady Wellerby, but elicited a moral on the annoyances of travelling companions, and more especially those who had not carriages of their own, and "all other appliances to boot," for ensuring the perfect independence of each traveller, by affording the power of separating the moment it became desirable. In short, Lady Wellerby proved, at least to her own satisfaction, that poverty, if not a crime of the deepest dye, ought to be considered as quite as strong a reason for avoiding those afflicted with it as if it were, and was eloquent in detailing the various *désagremens* it entailed on the unthinking persons who associated with its victims. Lord Fitzwarren would willingly have dispensed with the lengthy homily with which his future mother-in-law indulged him on this occasion,

and was pleased that Lady Olivia did not join in it; while Lord Wellerby remarked that, "for his part, experience had taught him always to avoid forming any intimacies with persons who were not rich, that he might be spared the unpleasant feeling of always expecting that they were about to demand assistance from him, a feeling" (added he) "most destructive to comfort."

"Hang me, if ever such a fear entered my head," said Lord Fitzwarren; "and I hardly know a pleasanter feeling than that experienced when one is able to rescue a friend out of a scrape."

"How like you, dear George!" observed Lady Olivia, looking at him with well-counterfeited tenderness; "you are so noble-minded and kind-hearted;" a compliment that drew from his lordship the remark that he was no better than a hundred fellows of his acquaintance, but that she was a deuced good girl.

"You are not, perhaps, aware that our old friend Axy Beaulieu is now the Marquis of Mountserrat?" said Lord Fitzwarren.

"Indeed!" exclaimed both the young ladies at once.

"He will be an excellent *parti*," observed Lady Wellerby, whose thoughts always reverted to good matches.

"Yes, a capital one," said her husband, and he glanced towards Lady Sophia, with a complacent re-

miniscence of the marquis having, when Lord Alexander Beaulieu, paid some attention to one of the sisters. The lady bridled, and affected a certain consciousness of comprehending the meaning of her father's glance; and Lady Olivia pouted her lips and tossed her head at the mere supposition that the attentions of the person in question could have been directed to any one but herself, to whom, in reality, they were addressed.

"Mountserrat is no longer a good *parti* for any one," said Lord Fitzwarren, "for he is already married."

"Married!" echoed the ladies; "and to whom?"

Great was their astonishment when the tale was related to them, and their indignation nearly equalled their surprise. That such a vulgar creature as the dreadful Irishwoman should have entrapped a man like their friend, and, above all, now that he was a marquis, filled them with anger, and they uttered sundry invectives against the deserted bride, who they pronounced to have richly merited the severest punishment.

"Come, come, don't throw all the blame on the poor woman," said Lord Fitzwarren. "If there was any entrapping in the case, it was not on her side, I can assure you, for the marriage was entirely Axy's seeking, and not hers."

"How dreadful to think that he cannot get rid of

this odious *mésalliance!*" observed Lady Sophia, turning up her eyes.

"And how horrid to have his title borne by such a person!" remarked Lady Wellerby.

"Yes; this vulgar Irishwoman, whom you were so shocked at, will take precedence of you all," said Lord Wellerby, spitefully.

"How can you contemplate our ever coming in contact with her?" demanded his wife.

"The Marchioness of Mountserrat will become a personage, you may be assured," replied Lord Wellerby. "Rich, with high rank, and hospitable as she is said to be, she will become a lion; and in England, you know, crowds are always ready to rush to see a lion feed;" and his lordship chuckled at his own attempt at a joke.

"The poor woman is in this hotel," said Lord Fitzwarren, "and I, having served as bridesman at her wedding, have thought it only decent to pay her a visit. She is very amusing, in her way, and excessively jolly; bears the desertion of her lord with great equanimity; and consoles herself with having secured a marquisate, though she has lost a marquis. It would be really very good-natured of you, Lady Wellerby, to call on her. I will introduce you."

"Not for the world! What would people say were I to take such a step? The very notion of it alarms me."

"I see nothing alarming in it, and proposed it because, knowing that you like a rubber of whist, and that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to make up one at Naples, I thought she would be quite an acquisition, and being in the hotel, that you could make up your rubber every night."

"Does she play well?" asked Lady Wellerby, anxiously.

"No, not well; but she does not object to high stakes," replied Lord Fitzwarren, biting his lips, to conceal a smile at the bait he had thrown out for his future mother-in-law having so well succeeded, and at his having asserted that of which he was in total ignorance, namely, whether or not the lady in question played whist at all.

"If you, my dear lord, really wish it," said Lady Wellerby, "I will vanquish my own repugnance, and call on this person; but you must take it as one of the strongest proofs I could give of my desire to please you."

"Or to make up a rubber," added Lord Wellerby, with a sneer.

"You believe every one to be as devoted to cards as you are," retorted the lady, angrily; "but, luckily, Lord Fitzwarren knows that in this instance I am influenced solely by my desire to do that which will be agreeable to him."

"I will call on the marchioness to-morrow, and

announce the honour you intend her," said Lord Fitzwarren.

"And, if you can manage to get up a rubber, pray do, for it will help one to get through the evening," rejoined Lord Wellerby.

"Rather than you should be disappointed, I will play a rubber or two myself," said Lord Fitzwarren, good-naturedly, and not sorry to get some means of abridging the evenings he found hang so heavily on his hands in the family circle of the Wellerbys.

The following day, pursuant to his promise, he paid a visit to the Marchioness of Mountserrat, and asked her leave to bring Lady Wellerby to call on her.

"What!" demanded she, "is not that the ugly old woman with the plain daughters, who were so uncivil to me at Rome? I am now higher in rank than they are, and I don't think it would be right of me to condescend to make their acquaintance."

"It is they who wish to make yours, my dear lady," replied he; "and Lady Wellerby is a lady of fashion, who can be very useful to you. I am going to marry one of her daughters; and, as you and I are now friends, I should like to make you acquainted with my future wife and her family."

"Well, my lord, I can refuse you nothing; but if you knew how ill they behaved . . . ."

"We must forgive and forget, my dear lady, and

take ladies of fashion as we find them. By the by, do you play whist?"

"Yes, but not over well."

"Then you will have a famous opportunity of improving your play, if you practice with Lady Wellerby; but don't play over high, for I shouldn't like you to lose your money."

"I shouldn't mind if I did, if it were only just to show this lady of fashion, who thinks so much of herself, how little I care about money, and how well I can afford to lose it."

When Lord Fitzwarren had taken his leave, the Marchioness of Mountserrat rang for Mrs. Bernard; and, no sooner had that lady made her appearance, than she told her to dress immediately in her best robe, for that visiters of great distinction were coming to call, and that it was necessary that her *dame de compagnie* should make a proper appearance. "Now, mind you make no mistake, but address me always by my title. What's the good of being a marchioness if I am not spoken to with proper respect? Are the prayer-books and bible come back with the coronets on 'em?"

"No, madam."

"There, again, you forget. Why can't you acquire the habit of always saying 'your ladyship?' Send for the books, for I can't appear at the minister's

chapel on Sunday, if the coronets are not on the prayer-books. I also wish to have them engraved on every book I have, and everything I use. Are my visiting cards come from the engraver's?"

"Yes, your ladyship."

"Let me see them."

The cards were brought, but the marchioness's ire knew no bounds, when she saw that they were simply stamped with the words, "The Marchioness of Mountserrat."

"This stupid mistake must be your doing," she exclaimed, her face becoming crimson with anger. "Why did you not have 'The Most Noble' put before my title? Don't you know that a marquis or marchioness is entitled to be styled 'The Most Noble?'"

"It is not usual to have it inscribed on their cards, I assure your ladyship."

"How should you know? Did a marchioness ever leave a card on you, I should like to know? I am sure not one ever did, for marchionesses are not to be met with every day in the week, I know, and when they are, they know better than to disgrace their high rank, by visiting people without titles."

Mrs. Bernard attempted no reply, well knowing how utterly useless it would be, and her despotic lady received her silence as an assent to her own conjecture

Justine was summoned to a consultation on the

toilette in which the visit from Lady Wellerby was to be received, and Mrs. Bernard was dismissed to make the necessary changes in hers.

"A very grand lady, Justin, is coming to visit me to-day, and I wish to be very elegantly dressed to receive her. What had I best wear?"

"I think, *madame la marquise* is very well dressed at present, and *très elegante*."

"Oh! no, Justin. Only see how badly this gown looks, and the lace *volants*, as you call them, are quite tumbled. Suppose I put on my organ dress?"

"*Madame la marquise* means her *organdi robe*."

"Yes, yes, that's what I meant. *That* has beautiful lace, and looks more like a bride's dress."

"But as de bridegroom has gone avay, I tink de less *madame la marquise* reminds de people dat she is a bride de better," observed the impertinent *femme de chambre*, with the most provoking coolness.

"But though he *has* gone, he could not take his title with him, or at least I am Marchioness of Montserrat in spite of his teeth, and with plenty of money to keep up my high rank, so I must dress accordingly."

"But *madame la marquise* must remember dat persons of high rank consider it very *vulgaire* to be overdressed in de morning."

"It is only those who can't afford it that have such nonsensical notions in their heads. I'll wear my

organ dress, with the beautiful lace flounces, and my fine Valenciennes *canes you*."

"*Madame la marquise* do always pronounce dat vord wrong. It is *canezou*, and not *canes you*."

"What does it signify! You know what I mean, and that is sufficient. I'll put on my last morning cap from Paris, with the pink ribands, and mind you have the pocket handkerchief, with the coronet in the corner, for me to hold in my hand. I am determined, Justin, to have large coronets embroidered in the four corners of my handkerchief, for then every one can see them; whereas, when there is only one corner with a coronet, I am forced to have that one always shown."

"But I must not let *madame de marquise* do vat vill make de peoples laugh. No one ever puts more dan von coronet on deir *mouchoir de poche*, and it would be considered very *vulgaire*, and like a *parvenue* to do so."

"But how could a marchioness be vulgar, Justin? It is only common people without titles that are vulgar. The haristocracy are always considered genteel and elegant, do what they will, and set the fashion in all things."

Justine shook her head, and looked incredulous, but she did not further argue with her obtuse mistress, from two motives—the first, because she believed that lady incapable of comprehending reason; and the second, that she wished to avoid displeasing her, lest

her so doing might check the generosity by which she so greatly benefitted, and which depended on her lady's being kept in good humour. Acting on the principle of conciliation, the artful *femme de chambre* offered no more objections to the too expensive dress in which the marchioness chose to attire herself, although she could not help shrugging up her shoulders, and raising her eyes towards the ceiling, when she beheld that personage leave her dressing-room, to take her place in the *salon*, to be in readiness to receive her expected visitors.

"*Oh, mon Dieu! quelle femme, quelle femme!*" exclaimed she; and taking her place before the mirror, she arranged her cap, and smiled complacently at the image it reflected. "Vat a moche better marquise I should make," murmured she, and she drew herself up with an air of dignity. "I have a *tournour elégante*, an air *distingué*, and a *je ne sais quoi* dat an English voman nevere can acquire. Yes, I should make a moche better marquise, and never be laughed at as dis stoopide creature is. I vonder if dat *mauvais sujet*, Turnefort, ever tink of me? *Tel maitre, tel valet. Mais, après tout*, all is for de best, as de *philosophes* say, and do dat bad man, de marquise, has decamped, and robbed me of my five tousand pounds, I may make moche more money vid dis *bête de femme*, now dat dere is no extravagant husband to lay hold of her fortune for himself, and to cut short her expenses."

At about four o'clock Lady Wellerby, escorted by her future son-in-law, Lord Fitzwarren, was ushered into the *salon* of the Marchioness of Mountserrat, whom they found reclining in a *bergère*, with a richly-bound book in her hand which she was affecting to be deeply engaged in. The servant had twice announced the presence of her visitors before the lady appeared to be conscious of their proximity, and when she did at last condescend to notice them, her assumption of dignity was so ludicrous that Lord Fitzwarren could with difficulty control his risible faculties. Having presented the ladies to each other, the marchioness motioned Lady Wellerby to a chair, and said, "How do you like Naples, countess?"

"Exceedingly. I hope that you find it agreeable."

"Why, to tell you the truth, I can't say much for it. The sights here are just as dull as at Rome. I was persuaded to go up Mount—I forget the name of it, but I mean the burning mountain, and a tiresome job it was, and when I got to the top, I could have fancied myself in Old Ireland again when one of the men called out, 'Look down on the crather,' just for all the world as the Irish beggars do, when they're asking charity. I saw nothing worth the trouble when I had got there: merely a hollow in the mountain, with smoke and blue flames now and then springing up from it, which reminded me of a huge punch-bowl,

nearly empty, with a little burning whisky at the bottom."

"A capital comparison, by Jove!" exclaimed Lord Fitzwarren, much amused by the effort Lady Wellerby was making to conceal her horror and disgust at the brogue and vulgarity of the lady she came to visit.

"What has most amused you at Naples?" asked he, desirous of drawing out the marchioness.

"The lazzeretto going about the streets in curicolos," replied the lady, mistaking the word lazzeroni for lazzeretto.

"You have, I suppose, seen Pompeii?" said Lady Wellerby.

"Yes, countess, and a rubbishing old place it is, not at all worth going to see."

"If you have no engagement for this evening, Lady Mountserrat, perhaps you would come and pass it with us," said Lady Wellerby. "Lord Wellerby and my daughters will be glad to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance."

"You are mighty kind, countess, and I don't care if I do. At what hour do you take tea?"

"At ten o'clock. We generally make up a rubber of whist."

"Well, as I see you wish to be sociable at present, countess, perhaps you and your family, and his lord-

ship here, will come and take pot-luck with me to-morrow, without any ceremony."

"I don't know whether we have formed any engagement for to-morrow or not," replied Lady Wellerby; "but if you will permit me to consult Lord Wellerby, I will inform you this evening whether we can avail ourselves of your invitation."

Lady Wellerby arose to depart, and the marchioness said, "Then why are you in such a hurry, countess? seeing your company is very agreeable to me, now that you are no longer on the high horse, as you were at Rome, but civil and polite, as one lady should be to another."

Lady Wellerby's cheek became tinged with red at this reference to the scene at the Corso during the Carnival, but, like a woman of the world, she quickly recovered her presence of mind, and said, "Ah! I did not then know who you were, Lady Mountserrat, and one must be so particular in a place like Rome, where all sorts of persons are thrown in one's way, that you must excuse me for not having sought your acquaintance, as I should have done had I been aware of your merit."

"Yes, countess, we of the haristocracy must be very particular who we make acquaintance with. So let bygones be bygones, and it shan't be my fault if we don't become good neighbours. 'Twill be a great

comfort to me to have a friend like you, left alone as I have been by the marquis, whose conduct to me has been very strange and unkind, as his friend here, Lord Fitzwarren, can tell you."

"You must not allow your spirits to be depressed," replied Lady Wellerby, affecting something like cordiality in her manner.

"Faith and I won't, countess. I'm not so mean-spirited. I can do without him as well as he can without me, I can assure him, and as I have plenty of money to keep up my title, I mean to enjoy myself as a marchioness ought."

"You are quite right, my dear madam," observed Lady Wellerby, and, escaping from the marchioness, she took her leave, heartily disgusted with the vulgarity of her new acquaintance, but determined that it should not prevent her from further cultivating it, if, as she hoped, she could induce her to make up a rubber every night while they remained at Naples, and that her own skill at cards should be found so superior as to ensure her success over her adversary.

"You left me in a pleasant dilemma," said the marchioness to Mrs. Bernard, as that enduring person entered the room, soon after Lady Wellerby had left it. "Why were you not here in your place, as I ordered you to be, when my noble visitors came?"

"The handle of the door of my room being broken,

I could not let myself out; and, although I rang the bell several times, no one came to release me until the moment before I presented myself here, madam."

"You have always some stupid excuse or other for neglecting your duty; and, if I were not the most patient and good-natured person in the world, I should have long since discharged you. But remember that, although, when plain Mrs. Maclaurin, I overlooked your negligence, I will not, as a marchioness, do so; so I advise you to be more careful, if you value your place. I have invited the Earl and Countess of Wellerby and their daughters, with the Earl of Fitzwarren, to dine here to-morrow. I wish to give them the best dinner and the choicest wines that Naples can furnish, so you must see the landlord and give him the necessary instructions."

Having issued her orders to her timid *dame de compagnie*, the marchioness retired to her dressing-room, to hold a consultation with her *femme de chambre* on the dress to be worn that evening.

"I wish to be very elegant, Justin," said she, "for these people are of the first fashion; quite tip-top people; none of your shabby-genteels, I can assure you, but real lords and ladies. Oh! Justin, how I long to see my name in the peerage! but that won't be until a new one comes out. I wonder, if I was to write to some friend in England to offer the man who

makes the book some money to bring it out immediately, whether he would?"

"In England, *madame la marquise*, everything can be done for money."

"Yes, Justin, the English are such clever, sensible people; they know how to value money, and those who possess it."

"*Oui*, *madame la marquise*, dey are so clever, dat dey nevare value dose dat have no money, whatever good qualities dey may possess; but let a person be riche, vid ever so many faults, and dey vill all *faire la cour* to him."

"What is *faire le cure*, Justin?"

"Dat is to flatter, to vat you call toady, *madame la marquise*."

"What do you think I had best wear this evening, Justin?"

"A *robe de mousseline*, vid *une echarpe de dentelle*."

"Do speak English, Justin; you know I don't understand French."

"Vell, den, a robe of muslin, vid a lace scarf, and a *chapeau* of *paille de ris*, vid flowers."

"No, that would not be elegant enough. Any one might afford to wear a dress like that, Justin, and I want to wear what only a grand and rich lady could have."

"But *madame la marquise* forgets dat de grande

and riche ladies like sometimes to be very simply dressed, *surtout* for *des petites soirées*."

"More fools they. A grand lady should always show by her dress that she is one, and not look like the wife of a mere gentleman. I'll wear a white lace dress over a pink satin slip, a pink hat and feathers, and my emeralds set in diamonds. I'll let 'em see what elegant things I have."

"Ah! if *madame la marquise* vould be governed by me, I vould invent such *charmantes* dresses for her, dat all de vorld would say nobody has such *recherchés toilettes*."

"No, Justin, your taste is a great deal too simple for me. I like to be always in full dress; for what's the use of fine things except to wear them?"

Great was the surprise of Lady Wellerby and her daughters that evening, when the marchioness entered their *salon* attired in a style fit only for a large assembly. The plainness and simplicity of their dresses might have shown their visitor the unsuitableness of hers, had she been less obtuse; but, far from being embarrassed by the contrast which their costumes offered to her own, she was pleased by it. Lady Wellerby presented her lord and daughters to the marchioness; and Lord Fitzwarren, as an older acquaintance, cordially shook hands with her, and complimented her on the splendour and taste of her toilette, while the young ladies drew themselves up, and eyed her askance.

Cards were soon introduced. Lord and Lady Wellerby proposed being partners, saying that they never played against each other, and the marchioness and Lord Fitzwarren sat down to oppose them.

"What stakes do you wish to play for?" asked Lady Wellerby.

"Whatever you like," replied the marchioness, with a careless air.

"Suppose we say louis points, and five on the rubber?" said Lady Wellerby.

"Agreed," replied the marchioness.

"You and I will settle for our stakes," said Lord Wellerby, bowing to the lady, "and Lady Wellerby will count with Lord Fitzwarren."

The mode in which the marchioness held her cards and sorted them denoted that she was not much skilled in the game; but she had only played a few minutes before it became evident that she was ignorant of the common rules of whist. The eyes of Lord Wellerby sparkled with pleasure as he noticed the gross errors she committed; and his lady wife's manner became almost affectionate towards her, as game after game, and rubber after rubber, was lost by her bad play.

"Were I you," said Lord Fitzwarren, "I would not play so high, for, be assured, you are no match for our adversaries, who are remarkably good players."

"I shall soon improve with a little practice," replied the marchioness, drawing forth from a richly-embroi-

dered reticule a spangled purse well filled with louis; "but, as I like to pay as I lose, let me settle for the rubbers lost before we commence another."

But even the whole contents of her well-stored purse was insufficient to pay half the sum she had lost. Lord Fitzwarren made a note of his debt to his future *belle mère*, most desirous never to play again with the marchioness for a partner, while her opponents, delighted beyond measure at having found one who not only afforded them so easy a victory, but who lost her money without seeming to care about it, were all politeness to her. They accepted her invitation to dinner for the next day, promising themselves a renewal of the good fortune of that evening, and separated at midnight.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The proverb says that gold has wings,
And every day's experience brings
The pithy truth before our eyes,
As Fortune's tide doth ebb and rise.
What pleasant paths to ruin tend,
Various, but reaching the same end!
The man that brooks not to behold
Distress, and freely yields his gold
With noble generosity
Too far indulged, will ruin see.
Another road is a fine taste,
By which men thousands soon may waste,
And brick and mortar, all will find,
But seldom leave much wealth behind.

Strathern was more surprised than pleased when he drove, the day after his arrival in London, to see the mansion that had been erected for him during his absence. Its magnitude, and the costliness of its architectural decorations, so far exceeded his intentions, that, little versed as he was in such matters, a

cursory glance convinced him that the architect he had employed, and on whom, he now recollected, with alarm, he had imposed no restrictions with regard to expenditure, had greatly abused his confidence. The mansion was of vast dimensions, and would require a large sum for its completion. True, he had seen a drawing before his departure, to give him, as the architect said, a notion of what Strathern House was to be, and he had approved it; but buildings look so different on paper and in reality, that Strathern never imagined that the elegant looking dwelling drawn for his approval could grow into the palatial one he was now gazing on, with more alarm for the wide breach it would inevitably make in his fortune than with any satisfaction at its splendour. Had his engagement to Louisa Sydney still subsisted, the thought that this magnificent abode would be shared with her might have reconciled him to the large outlay its erection and completion would require, but for him—a single, a lonely man, and doomed, in all human probability, to continue so all his life — a palace like this seemed useless and absurd; and, having wandered through its lofty and spacious suites of apartments, in every one of which fresh proofs of the reckless extravagance of the architect were exhibited, he left the house to keep an appointment with his solicitor, nervous and alarmed in anticipation

of the disclosures which he felt convinced awaited him.

The interview with Mr. Papworth proved that his anticipations were well founded, for that gentleman's first observation was, "I have been expecting to hear from you, sir, for some time, in reply to the letters I wrote to you to Italy, informing you of the course Mr. Drinkwater, your architect, was pursuing. I had, unfortunately, been called to Ireland, on business that detained me there several months. Finding, during my stay there, that the demands for money from Mr. Drinkwater were to a very large amount, I hastened, on my return, to see the mansion he was erecting. I confess to you, sir, that its vast extent and its unnecessary magnificence surprised and alarmed me. I knew you wished for a fine house, decorated with taste and elegance, but I did not think you wished for a palace suited only to the establishment of a sovereign prince. I stated my opinion to Mr. Drinkwater, requested him to await your answer to a letter I should write to you that day before he advanced still more with the work, and declined making him any further payment, although he urged me to do so with great pertinacity; but, far from attending to my request, he has gone on with the same reckless disregard to expense as before, so that I am glad you have returned, that a check may be imposed on him ere it be too late for your in-

terests. It is a great pity, sir, that you had not exacted a contract for the building, and made an express condition that a certain sum should not be exceeded."

Never, previously, had Strathern felt so aware of the imprudence of which he had been guilty, in employing a man of whom he knew nothing, except that he was recommended to him as an architect of good taste by a young nobleman of his acquaintance. There is something very humiliating in having indisputable proofs of our own want of sense and judgment brought coolly and dispassionately before us, and by one, too, of whose abilities, in comparison with our own, we had entertained no very exalted opinion.

Mr. Papworth, the solicitor and agent of Strathern, was remarkable for only two peculiarities; the first was a degree of caution which, whether the result of experience with regard to mankind in general, or solely founded on a knowledge of one specimen of the genus, self, induced him to look on all who approached him on business as designing persons, intent on taking some unfair advantage of him or his employer, and against whom it behoved him to be on his guard; the second peculiarity was a sort of triumphant self-complacency, invariably exhibited whenever his clients, having ventured to exercise their own sagacity without

an appeal to his, found themselves by the result in any difficulty. Then would he say, with his most provoking look of self-satisfaction, "You see, sir, the consequence of not having consulted me;" or, "Had my advice been taken, this could not have occurred;" and, however obvious the truth of these assertions might be to those to whom they were addressed, they produced so little comfort under the annoyance from which they were suffering, that few, if any, of his clients left Mr. Papworth on such occasions, without having experienced a painful sense of humiliation, added to the previous vexation, which was ill calculated to induce that confidence, which it is almost, if not quite, as essential to have in one's legal adviser as in one's medical one. Strathern felt this keenly, while he listened to the animadversions of his solicitor on the necessity of precaution, or, in other words, the prudence of never acting on his own judgment, the fallibility of which his want of caution with regard to Mr. Drinkwater offered so striking a proof.

"It is of little use to dwell on my oversight in this affair," replied he, biting his nether lip, and evincing sundry other symptoms of impatience; "you had much better tell me what it is best to do, in order at once to check Mr. Drinkwater's proceedings."

"I will write a letter, sir, which you will be so

good as to sign, in which I will prohibit his advancing any further with the decorative part (the rest you are aware is completed) until he has furnished an accurate account of the expenses incurred up to this date."

The letter was forthwith written, Strathern's signature affixed to it, and he left Mr. Papworth, if not a wiser, at least a more dissatisfied man, than when he met him. The first person he encountered, as he walked in a listless mood up St. James's Street, was Mr. Rhymer.

"You are a fortunate man," said that gentleman to him, with one of his most sepulchral smiles. "I saw this morning, for the first time, your splendid palace, and congratulate you on being the owner of a residence that so far exceeds, both in extent and grandeur, every ducal one in England. You are much to be envied, and now only require a bride with the purse of Fortunatus to enable you to maintain a retinue suitable to such an abode, for your own fortune, large as I have always heard it to be, must have sustained a wide breach in the erection of such a building, to say nothing of the ruinously expensive decorations. I was making a calculation in my mind of the fearful amount which your purchases at Rome, added to this palace, must come to, and have only to observe that I hope you won't verify the old proverb that *un*wise men build houses for wise ones to dwell in."

"I believe the proverb uses the more homely epithet of *fools*, which you have so politely turned into *un*wise men," replied Strathern, endeavouring to conceal the annoyance he felt. "I thank you for the hopes so kindly expressed—that I may not verify the old proverb—and trust that you will see the fulfilment of your good wishes, and spend some pleasant days at Strathern House when it is completed."

"I thought of her who I once fancied was to be its mistress when I looked at it this morning. Poor young creature! Its splendour would ill accord with her fallen fortune. You broke off your engagement at Rome, I believe, which was fortunate, as a portionless bride would not suit any man who has built such a palace as yours, unless, indeed, he possessed the fortune of Crœsus."

"Fallen fortunes! poor young creature! To whom do you refer?" demanded Strathern, with breathless emotion.

"To whom should I refer but to Miss Sydney? You surely must have heard that, through a flaw in her grandfather's will, she loses the whole property to which she was believed to be heiress."

"Is it possible, and where is she? Tell me, I entreat you?" demanded Strathern eagerly, forgetting all his chagrin in the engrossing interest excited for her who still reigned triumphantly over his heart.

"Why, you positively look as if you were more pleased than sorry at the news I have given you," observed Mr. Rhymer, narrowly examining Strathern's countenance. "Are you so hard-hearted as to rejoice in the fallen fortunes of one you once professed to love? or is it that you have still enough of the romantic sentiments of youth left as to desire to atone to Miss Sydney for the fickleness of that blind jade, Dame Fortune, by offering to lay yours at her feet?"

"This is not a time to trifle," replied Strathern, gravely. "If you know where Mrs. and Miss Sydney at present reside, pray tell me; if not, inform me where I am most likely to gain intelligence."

"I honour you for this anxiety," said Mr. Rhymer, his pale and saturnine face relaxing into an expression of cordial good will; "and I would gladly give you the information you seek were it in my power; but I regret to say I really do not know where those ladies are, nor am I acquainted with any one who does. My solicitor is, I think, on terms of amity with theirs, who is, I understand, a very worthy man, and I will ask him to inquire where they now are."

"A thousand thanks," said Strathern, cordially pressing the attenuated hand of Mr. Rhymer until that gentleman's countenance betrayed the pain the warm grasp occasioned.

"Hold, young sir," observed he, extending his fingers as if to restore animation to them; "you forget that I am neither young, nor in love. God bless me, how you have cramped my poor hand!"

"Pray pardon me, dear Mr. Rhymer. I hope I have not seriously injured your hand?"

"*Dear* Mr. Rhymer!" reiterated the cynic. "How strangely the word dear attached to my name sounds! No one uses it to me except distressed authors wanting to borrow money, and young ladies desirous of poems for their albums, which last, by the by, I never indulge. Where shall I send to you when I hear from my solicitor?"

"To the Clarendon Hotel."

"I am going to dine with the Duke of Wellington to-day, have a command from the palace for to-morrow, am engaged to the Sutherlands for the day after, and to the Buccleughs for Saturday, or I should request you to come and dine with me on one of those days; but if you will breakfast with me on Sunday you will meet a few clever people."

"On Sunday it will not be in my power."

"Oh! you go to church, I suppose. A very good habit, which I, somehow or other, have got out of; and at my age it is so difficult to fall back into old habits again. Well, *addio!* You shall hear from me the moment I get the information you require;" and

off walked Mr. Rhymer, leaving Strathern to pursue his promenade alone.

As he turned into Bond Street, intending to go to his hotel, he met the Marquis of Mountserrat, mounted on a very fine horse, and followed by a groom, who rode an equally good one. No sooner did he perceive Strathern than he alighted, and, giving his horse to the charge of his servant, advanced with extended hand to meet him. "My dear fellow, I am charmed to see you," exclaimed he, shaking his old acquaintance warmly by the hand. "I have just been to the Clarendon in search of you, having this morning read in the *Post* of your arrival at that hotel. Town very full. How different from Rome, that city of eternal dullness! *Apropos* of Rome, how have you left all our friends there? Are you yet become a Benedict, or are you only on the point of entering the holy state, as grave people call it?"

A few words sufficed to inform him that neither supposition was correct.

"And where are Mrs. and Miss Sydney now?" inquired Lord Mountserrat, with affected carelessness.

"I really cannot inform you," replied Strathern, "for I only arrived in London yesterday, and as yet do not know the whereabouts of any of my friends."

"Some of our old chums said they saw you at the Opera last night, but I was so taken up with a new

flame of mine there, that I had eyes only for her. You are a prude, I know of old, Strathern, so I will not shock your chaste ears by recounting to you my *bonnes fortunes*."

"Thanks for this forbearance," said Strathern. "I plead guilty to the charge of prudery, if it consists in an extreme antipathy to listening to the narrations of love passages with singers and opera dancers."

"I fly at higher game, I assure you, and leave such *bonnes fortunes* to worn-out old *roués*, and boys just escaped from college. Such a woman, Strathern! Quite the rage. Half the men about town at her feet. Am I not a lucky dog to have got into the good graces of Lady ....."

"Hold!" said Strathern; "I beg to be left in ignorance of the name of the unfortunate person whose fame and honour you so little respect as to compromise both by your unsolicited disclosures."

"Why, my good fellow, all London knows it. They talk of nothing else at the clubs."

"Then it is the less necessary that you should proclaim it," observed Strathern, coldly.

"Look, there is that fellow Olliphant; he has lost all his fortune on the turf and at play, and we, his old friends, are obliged to cut him, lest he should ask us to lend him money. What a bore it is that people should fancy that because they were known to one in

their prosperous days, and that one lived on habits of friendship with them when they were rich, that it is to continue when they get poor! Dogs are said to detest beggars, but, hang me, if I don't hate poor acquaintances still more! Don't you, Strathern?"

"No," replied Strathern, gravely, "I do not, and you need not have asked the question, for you may remember that when you were in the category of that unfortunate class, I evinced no symptoms of dislike towards you."

"*Apropos* of which," said the marquis, his cheek growing red at this reproof, "I believe I am your debtor for a few hundreds or so, which I will repay you."

"And which I will transfer to poor Olliphant, whom I remember a kind-hearted, generous friend to all his old college chums who required his assistance."

"Be assured you will find him a regular bore if you do, for he is one of the most unreasonable fellows alive. Why—would you believe it?—when he found himself regularly done up, he had the coolness to expect that all those whom he had formerly assisted should then come to his aid, and that those who had won large sums from him ought to refund a few hundreds, in order to enable him to retire to Van Diemen's Land, or some other outlandish place. I

suggested to him that he might find a mode of getting sent there without our parting with our money, and so thought the rest of our clique, and we declined granting his request, which he chose to take as an affront—nay, more, had the folly to want to fix a quarrel and duel on one of us. This we also declined; for really, if one was to consent to fight every fellow to whom one refuses to lend money, a man would have a pleasant time of it."

"And this is the man whom you used all to proclaim the best fellow in the world—the most generous and hospitable, to attend whose *recherché* dinners and *petits soupers* you threw over every other invitation —whose purse, horses, and carriages were always at your service!"

"*Que voulez vous, mon ami? Ainsi va le monde.* Life is too short, money too precious, and pleasure too engrossing, to permit a sensible man to throw away any portion of either of the first two on fools who did not know how to husband them. 'Every man for himself,' is my motto, and I observe it is one now very generally adopted."

Strathern withdrew his arm from Lord Mountserrat's, so thoroughly disgusted with his undisguised selfishness that he could no longer repress the emotions it excited in his breast, and, coldly wishing him good morning, he walked away, leaving his unworthy

acquaintance surprised and somewhat offended at his coldness. He had nearly reached the Clarendon Hotel, when he again saw Mr. Olliphant walking on the opposite side of the street, no longer the well-dressed, volatile young man he had formerly been, but plainly, if not shabbily, attired, and with a grave and pensive aspect. Strathern, filled with pity for the altered position of one whom only two brief years before he had known in a brilliant one, crossed the street, determined to accost him; but, so habituated had the unhappy Olliphant become to the avoidance of his former *soi-disant* friends that, although he recognised Strathern at a glance, he bent his eyes to the ground to avoid the humiliation of being cut by him, as he had constantly been by their mutual acquaintances ever since his fallen fortunes had been known to them; and the blood that mounted in his cheek betrayed that he was still keenly alive to the unkindness he anticipated.

"Do you not know me, my dear Olliphant?" demanded Strathern, extending his hand, and seizing that of his old acquaintance, who, agreeably surprised by the friendliness of his manner, returned the pressure with great warmth, while he murmured something about his fear that Strathern might have forgotten him. "I am living here," said Strathern, as they reached the door of the Clarendon Hotel.

"Come in, my dear fellow, and let us have a little chat together."

"I saw you walking with the Marquis of Mountserrat," observed Mr. Olliphant; "and as he is one of those among my old acquaintance who have behaved the most unkindly to me, I feared that he might have prejudiced you against me, as I saw him pointing me out to you."

Strathern drew from the unhappy man a statement of his case. It was a painful, but a too common one, the result of imprudence, and generosity misapplied and abused, followed by the never-failing consequence of an attempt to retrieve shattered fortunes by a recourse to the gaming-table and the turf, which achieved his total ruin.

"I had hoped that those who had profited by my former prodigality, and won my last thousands, madly staked to avert the evil which their loss so rapidly accomplished, would have refunded a few hundreds to enable me to go to Australia or Van Diemen's Land to seek a livelihood. But they refused, and added insult to the refusal. Oh! if I could but live the last few years over again, how different would be my conduct. But, alas! I saw not my errors, and knew not the real nature and character of those on whom I so prodigally heaped benefits until it was too late to profit by my bitter experience. And for these very

men I quarrelled with my excellent uncle, who warned me of their heartlessness and selfishness, which I, fool that I was, would not credit, and obstinately resisting his counsel, the wisdom of which every day's experience has since convinced me of, he has cast me off for ever."

The kind heart of Strathern was touched by the narration of his luckless friend, and before they parted, he not only bestowed on him present aid, but pledged himself to give him five thousand pounds to carry his scheme of emigration into effect. Poor Olliphant left him overpowered by gratitude for his kindness, and the delicacy evinced towards his feelings by the manner in which it was conferred; and Strathern experienced more satisfaction in the consciousness of having performed a good action than he had known for some time. Would the selfish and sordid mortals who hoard useless thousands, but sometimes try the effect of expending some portion of them in relieving the miseries of the unfortunate, they would find in the self-satisfaction conferred by such generosity a greater happiness than the contemplation of their wealth ever afforded them. Their sleep would be more calm and refreshing, and their awakings more cheerful.

A week had elapsed before Strathern was furnished with a statement of the expense incurred in the building of his palace. When, however, it was laid before

him by Mr. Papworth, the amount far exceeded his worst anticipations.

"I see you are astonished, sir," said that gentleman, "and so I confess am I, although I was prepared to find that Mr. Drinkwater had not neglected to take advantage of the confidence, you will permit me to add, so unwisely placed in him."

"One hundred and eighty-five thousand, six hundred and forty-four pounds already expended!" observed Strathern, his face considerably lengthened.

"And an estimate that to complete the mansion, from sixty to eighty thousand pounds more will be required, making, as you will find, sir, no less a sum total than two hundred and sixty-five thousand, six hundred and forty-four pounds, taking for granted that the larger, and not the less, sum noted in the estimate, will be the real amount expended in the completion. A vast, an astounding sum, sir; the interest of which would bring an income of....."

"Pray do not take the trouble of calculating," said Strathern, impatiently interrupting the self-complacent Mr. Papworth. "The point at present to be considered is, whether there is any means of our satisfying ourselves that this vast expenditure has really been fairly incurred, and whether the sum stated for the completion is not greatly overrated?"

"I can have the building surveyed and valued, and

an estimate furnished by another architect, of the money required for its completion. Already has Mr. Drinkwater drawn large sums on account—you, sir, having authorised him to do so, a measure on which, had you done me the honour of consulting me, I should have deemed it my duty to counsel you against. It requires considerable knowledge of the world, and great experience, to enable one to guard against the danger to which every gentleman of large fortune is exposed on first entering society, and it is much to be lamented that you were not disposed to profit by mine, which would, doubtless, have saved you from the ruinous consequences which your misplaced confidence in Mr. Drinkwater is likely to entail."

This perpetual recurrence to his imprudence was so disagreeable to Strathern that he abridged the interview with the sapient Mr. Papworth long before that gentleman was disposed to take his leave, promising himself henceforth to avoid as much as possible all intercourse with him, and to conceal any imprudence, either of omission or commission, from his legal adviser, rather than draw on himself again the indirect reproofs of which he had just had a specimen, or witness the self-complacency exhibited on every occasion by Mr. Papworth. The next day, Strathern called at his banker's, in order to ascertain the state

of his accounts there. He anticipated that the balance in his favour would be considerably less than it had ever previously been since he had opened an account there, and had he not been prepared for this fact the grave countenances of the partners of the firm in Lombard Street would have led him to suspect it. The barometer is not a more certain criterion for judging of the weather than a banker's countenance is for ascertaining the state of the balance-sheet of any of those individuals who bank with him. Hitherto, Strathern had been always met with smiles by Messrs. Culpeppar, Lockstone, and Firminger, for he had kept a large sum in their hands, and his drafts had been neither frequent nor of large amount until his departure for the Continent. While there he had paid away vast sums for works of art, and had latterly authorised his friend, Lord Delmington, to draw for all the money he should require. This last unusual step had greatly alarmed the bankers, who, coupling it with the enormous payments made to Mr. Drinkwater, had come to the conclusion that Mr. Strathern was not likely to be so advantageous a customer as he had hitherto been. The draft for five thousand pounds to the ruined spendthrift Olliphant, whose position was generally known, confirmed their suspicions of the imprudence of his benefactor, hence the solemn bows and formal countenances with which they greeted him

when he entered their bank in Lombard Street. To his expressed desire to be furnished with his account, and to be informed at once of the amount of the balance in his favour, he was told that the first command should be obeyed next day, and one of the partners instantly went over the books, in order to fulfil the second.

He soon returned, and reported that only a few hundreds remained in their hands—observed on the scarcity of money in the City, and looked as serious as if he expected that Strathern was about to solicit a large advance. He was, however, greatly relieved by that gentleman telling him that he would order some thousands to be lodged to his credit next day; and Strathern departed, making sundry wise reflections on the influence of money, and the importance it confers on those who possess it.

CHAPTER XLIV.

O, Nature! they indeed are wise
Who early learn thy charms to prize,
And find in rural scenes a bliss
Those pent in cities ever miss.
How sweet to rove at early morn,
'Mid flow'rs that dewdrops bright adorn,
And hear the birds with jocund glee
Give forth wild notes of melody;
Or at the noontide hour to stray,
Where sunbeams pierce some leafy way;
Or, musing, cheat the sultry hours
Beside a fountain's crystal show'rs.
And when descends the dewy eve,
And pensive nature seems to grieve
For day's departure—oh, 'tis sweet
In fond remembrance then to meet
The lov'd, the absent—who no more
Are near to bless us as of yore.
O, Nature! thou calm thoughts canst give,
Then let me ever with thee live.

Afflictions that fall but lightly on the young, press heavily on those who have passed the season of youth. Had Louisa Sydney never experienced a disappoint-

ment of the heart (and those are the only ones that make a deep impression on the youthful), she might have felt more acutely the change entailed by her altered fortunes; but the regrets for this unlooked-for event were so light, when compared with what she had endured ever since her separation from Strathern, that she bore them with a fortitude that surprised, while it greatly gratified, her mother. Mrs. Sydney passed a sleepless night on that memorable one which saw her and her daughter enter Thames Grove. Her thoughts were all engrossed by the position of her child—reduced from affluence to poverty, and the reflections of how she could best secure her a future competency banished sleep, although never did she stand more in need of its refreshing aid. The savings made from her own private fortune, and which now amounted to a large sum, she determined on devoting to the reimbursement of the money claimed by the heir-at-law to her late husband's fortune. The law would not, it was true, compel this step, but hers was not a mind to be influenced by legal considerations, and even the desire of appropriating her savings to form a provision for her beloved child, faded away before the stern necessity of that which she felt to be an act of duty. She would at once assign half her income to insure her life for the benefit of her daughter, and this step would secure to her the consolation

that when *she* should be no more, Louisa would have sufficient for all the comforts, and many of the luxuries, of life.

This determination removed a load of anxiety from her breast; she wondered that the plan had not sooner suggested itself to her mind, or that Mr. Wandsworth had not thought of it, and, soothed by it, she dropped into a gentle slumber as the first beams of morning pierced into her chamber, and the carols of innumerable birds were heard from the garden beneath her window.

No thought of her fallen fortunes weighed on the mind of Louisa Sydney, although she, too, had counted many hours on her pillow before sleep pressed her eyelids; Strathern occupied every thought. How *he* would feel on hearing that she was no longer the rich heiress he once desired to wed, often occurred to her, and, as her eyes glanced around on the simple furniture and chintz hangings of the neat little chamber and bed in which she reclined, she thought that such a dwelling as Thames Grove, different though it was from the stately home she had so lately left, might be a happy, a blessed one, if cheered by the love of him whose presence could have rendered even the humblest abode a scene of felicity to her, while she deemed him worthy of her affection. And then came the oft-repeated, never-solved question

of "Why did she still cherish his image in her heart when she could no longer esteem or respect him?"

Was she not weak, and, worse than weak, culpable, in thus continually thinking of him, not as she now knew him to be, fallen and worthless, but as she had believed him to be when she had promised to share his destiny? At length sleep closed her eyes, and her dreams afforded a happiness denied to her waking thoughts. Strathern was again her companion. His words of love once more sounded like sweet music in her ears. He reproached her gently for having ever doubted an affection so fond and true as his, and rejoiced that *her* altered fortunes enabled him to prove the sincerity and disinterestedness of his love by laying himself and fortune at her feet; but, when about to place her hand in his, all her confidence restored, a female figure glided between them, and, seizing Strathern's arm, forced him away, although he struggled to release himself from her grasp, and turned his eyes with an expression of unutterable tenderness towards herself. A veil, which had hitherto shaded the face of the female, now dropped off; and Louisa recognised, with agony, the beautiful woman with whom she had last seen Strathern—the well remembered face she had first beheld at the Coliseum. She awoke bathed in tears; nevertheless her dream had comforted her, for it had represented him still so dear

to her, fond as he had formerly been, and anxious to break from that fair but fallen woman, who kept him from her; and, as she mused on the vision, she felt disposed to accept it as a good omen, until, pensively smiling at her own superstitious weakness in attaching any faith to dreams, she left her pillow. When Mrs. Sydney and her daughter met, each narrowly examined the countenance of the other, with that watchful love which would fain divine by the thoughts, rather than question by words, the state of the feelings. Both had schooled themselves to assume a calmness they were far from feeling, for each wished to conceal the anxiety to which both were a prey, lest the knowledge of it might inflict additional uneasiness on the other.

"Did you sleep well, dearest mother?" asked Louisa, as she embraced her parent.

"Yes, dearest, my room was so quiet, and my bed so excellent—and you, darling, did you pass a comfortable night?"

"Most comfortable. I begin to think, dearest mother, that no home is more tranquil and pretty than a cottage. This one is so picturesque and neat that it has quite made me a convert. I used to have a dread of those tempting-looking dwellings, overgrown with woodbine and roses, that peep into the windows the moment they are opened, and deposit in the rooms

earwigs and other insects, to the great annoyance of the inhabitants. I expected to see a battalion of ants entering the doors, and cockchafers wandering through the apartments; but this charming cottage has corrected my preconceived opinion, and I am sure you and I, dearest mother, will be as happy in a cottage home as ever we were in more stately ones."

Mrs. Sydney arose and pressed her daughter to her breast, for she knew how to value the self-control which she felt assured had prompted her assumption of cheerfulness, and her own aspect brightened as she contemplated that of her child.

"Look, mother, can anything be more beautiful than the view from this bay-window? The smooth and velvet-like lawn, the varied beds of lovely flowers scattered through it, the noble trees and fine shrubs, and the rapid and pellucid river that bounds it, what can be more charming? I feel as if I should never wish to leave such a spot; and, if we can but find one like it, how happy we shall be!"

"We will ask Mr. Wandsworth to look out for a cottage for us, as like this as possible, dearest; my only fear is lest we should find a winter in it rather trying to our health;" and Mrs. Sydney sighed as she reflected on the delicacy of her daughter's.

"Delicacy of health and warm climates are considerations only for the rich, dear mother; and, as we

no longer appertain to that privileged class, we must become robust and independent of skicy influences. I mean to turn my talents—if, indeed, I possess any —to gardening, superintending the dairy and poultry-yard, and acquiring the art of making those delicious breakfast cakes which used sometimes to tempt your puny appetite at home."

Mrs. Sydney smiled faintly at the assumed gaiety of Louisa, and felt that she was, if possible, dearer to her than ever for this display of it. But, the truth was, there was less of assumption in Louisa's gaiety than her mother imagined ; and, at the risk of shocking our readers by an acknowledgment of the weakness of our heroine, candour compels us to state that her dream of the previous night, in spite of all her reasoning against such a piece of folly, still exercised a very salutary influence on her spirits, and induced a cheerfulness to which she had long been a stranger. When she sought her chamber after breakfast, to put on her bonnet and shawl for a stroll on the lawn, she was met by Nurse Murray, who, with a lengthened face, expressed her hope that her dear young lady had found something fit to eat for her morning repast.

"Oh ! yes, my good Murray, an excellent breakfast. Such nice butter and cream, and good bread !"

"But only one kind of bread, and no cakes or

rolls! Oh! this is but a poor, a very poor sort of place for such ladies as your lady mother and you, Miss Sydney! No regular man-cook, or, in fact, any cook at all for the matter of that, but just a make-shift sort of woman, who takes care of the house, and a shabby concern it is by the way of a house. I never could abide cottages. They never have house-keepers' rooms, or stewards' rooms, or any of the other comforts to which upper servants are accustomed; and I wonder, for my part, what Mr. Wandsworth could be thinking of when he asked such ladies as mine to come to such a poor little confined place, where there is not a room where your mother's maid and I could take our meals, except a sort of servants' hall, with a flagged floor, and not a bit of carpet to lay under our feet. And, as for dinner, I'm sure I can't guess how it is to be provided or cooked!"

"My good Murray, you must learn to be less fastidious for the future," said Miss Sydney, gravely. "That is, if you wish to continue to serve me. By a flaw, only lately discovered, in my grandfather's legal settlement of his estates, it is found that they do not appertain to me."

"Not appertain to you, darling, his own lawful grand-daughter! To who else could they belong? Why, it would be nothing less than robbery should they go to any one else. No, I'll never believe, not-

withstanding all the evil things I have always heard said against law, that it can be so bad as to take away a fortune from a gentleman's own lawful granddaughter, to give it to a distant relation, merely because that relation happens to be a man. No, that would be too bad;" and old Nurse Murray drew her breath with difficulty, and her expansive chest laboured with certain undulating motions, symptoms peculiar to her when more than usually excited.

"I have told you the fact, Murray, in order that you should comprehend the absolute necessity of henceforth submitting with resignation to the inevitable consequences of my altered circumstances."

"Oh, my dear and honoured young lady, can you doubt your poor old Murray's submitting to anything, to everything that you may require? I would live on dry bread, yes, that I would, to be with you;" and tears of genuine affection vouched the truth of the old nurse's assertion.

"Be cautious, then, my good Murray, not to evince any discontent at the difference of the accommodation here and at our old home. We owe this abode to the kindness of Mr. Wandsworth, who offered it to us when we knew not where to go."

"Ah, darling! if I had only known this, I never would have found fault with it; but how could I guess what has occurred? How could I ever imagine such a

terrible change? I thought your coming here was only just a fancy, such as fine ladies often have to leave grand places of their own, where they have every comfort and elegance, to go to some little cottage, where nothing of what they have been accustomed to can be found, and the novelty of which pleases them, while the poor servants find the change a most disagreeable one; for, indeed, Miss Sydney, gentlefolk can form no notion of what a hardship it is for servants, after being used to every comfort, to come to little places like this, with bedrooms like pigeon-holes, and no housekeeper's or steward's room, and no still-room maid or active lad to wait upon them." And Nurse Murray sighed deeply as she recalled to mind the spacious and admirable servants' offices at Sydney Park, and the tidy and attentive domestics whose peculiar province it was to attend to the occupants of the housekeeper's and steward's rooms.

"Yes, Murray, I can imagine the change to be anything but agreeable; but as, unfortunately, it is unavoidable, it must be borne with patience."

"What a pity it is, miss, that I hadn't an inkling of the state of affairs before I left home! Home I still call it, though, woe's me, it is no longer our home!" and Murray's tears flowed afresh.

"What would the knowledge have availed you, my

good Murray, except to have rendered your parting from Sydney Park more painful?"

"Why, miss, I could have had my own easy chair, and sofa, and footstool packed up to be sent wherever we fix, and several other little things that I am attached to from having used them so many years; and the beautiful new Kidderminster carpet, that was only just laid down in the housekeeper's room the week after we came home from Italy—oh! isn't it a sin and a shame to leave it behind? And I should like to have had my bed, for there never was so comfortable a bed; I thought of it all last night, when I couldn't sleep on the hard one they gave me here."

Miss Sydney bore with patience the old woman's selfish but natural regrets, and endeavoured to explain to her that she had no right to remove anything from Sydney Park, now that it and all it contained appertained to Mr. Sydney.

"But surely, miss, after having so long considered these things my own, and their being always called mine, it is hard they should be left for strangers;" and again tears started to the eyes of the old woman.

"I, too, my poor Murray, have left many things at Sydney Park endeared to me by long habit; but we must forget past comforts, and submit to present and future privations."

"Ah! miss, I fear we must, and the more's the

pity. Well, well, who'd have thought it? But as economy must, I suppose, be the order of the day, it would be well if Mrs. Sydney would engage the upper kitchenmaid at Sydney Park as cook. She is really very clever, and I must say often did the whole dinner herself when the cook was ailing, or out of temper. She does many of the knick-knacks and *on trees* (*entrées*) quite as well as he can, and as for hot breakfast-rolls and cakes, I'll back her against any baker in any nobleman's establishment in England;" and Murray became quite excited as she recalled to mind these dainties so liberally supplied by the clever upper kitchenmaid to the housekeeper's room.

"I'll name it to my mother," replied Miss Sydney.

"And there's the second housemaid, miss, an active, stirring girl, never seen without a carpet-broom, pope's-head, or duster in her hand, and one of the very best bedmakers I ever met with, and I'm a judge, for I'm very particular indeed about how my bed is made. I couldn't close my eyes last night, the bed they gave me was so uneven and lumpy. Mary Allwork would be a capital housemaid if, as I suppose, Mrs. Sydney will only keep one, and I'm so used to her that I'd prefer her to all others. Then there is the still-room maid, so clever at ices, and other nice things, I don't think *we* could do without her. She knows everything wanting in a housekeeper's room, and one has no occa-

sion to ask twice for it. She hasn't her equal for making tea and coffee. No, I don't think we could manage without Fanny Betterton."

Miss Sydney smiled as she noted the *naïveté* with which Nurse Murray already evinced that she contemplated her own personal comfort in the formation of the new establishment she proposed, much more than that of her employers, and having told Murray that she feared the limited scale of domestics which Mrs. Sydney intended to keep would not comprise a still-room maid, she put on her bonnet and shawl, leaving the poor old nurse groaning in spirit at the anticipation of future privations and hardships which she felt it would be difficult indeed for her to endure, and wondering how her young lady could bear up against such trials as the being deprived of a stately home, the nicest of hot rolls and cakes for the matinal meal, the most tempting luncheons, and the most capital dinners—creature comforts, which, in Nurse Murray's estimation, formed the happiness of life.

As Louisa Sydney roved through the shrubbery that bounded the small but beautiful domain of Thames Grove, and on the verdant lawn that felt like velvet to the feet, inhaling the perfume of the blooming flowers with which it was so abundantly stocked, and listened to the sweet notes of the various birds that hopped fearlessly from bough to bough, and ran amid the

flowers, she acknowledged that only in the tranquil shades of the country can a mind, harassed by care, taste repose. The silence that reigned around, interrupted but by the delightful songs of the thrushes and blackbirds with which the grounds abounded, or the soothing murmurs of the silvery Thames, as it flowed rapidly along the edge of the lawn, composed and cheered her spirits, and the pleasure she experienced in this lovely scene gave her the assurance that the charms of Nature could well console her for the loss of that wealth and splendour to which she had so long been accustomed to believe herself entitled.

"It requires but little to furnish me with a home like this," thought Louisa, gazing around; "and though it cannot be compared with Sydney Park, it would, Heaven be thanked! be quite sufficient for my modest wishes. Here, with my dear mother, my books, and my pleasant occupations, time would glide smoothly and tranquilly, if not happily, along, and peace of mind would gradually become mine. Yes, in the country, and only in the country, can I hope to regain peace. The busy world, with its tumultuous joys and empty pleasures, has lost all its attractions for me, and, young as I am, I feel in this peaceful solitude as a poor mariner does who has long been exposed to storms, and buffeted by the waves, when he reaches some safe haven of rest. With the wealth

I have lost, I have acquired an independence of mind that never could have appertained to the rich heiress. I now view the world through a different medium; and sure of escaping the snares and toils ever laid for those of my sex who possess wealth, I may henceforth live free from the dread and suspicion of being sought only for my wealth that have hitherto poisoned life."

While Louisa Sydney was indulging these reflections, her mother was noting down her projects for the future, and any one who had chanced to peruse them, would have felt an increased sentiment of admiration and respect for her, as her total abnegation of self was developed in the plans she was laying down. Mr. Wandsworth entered the study where she was writing, having left his chambers in London long before his usual hour for quitting them, that he might pay his respects to his fair clients.

"I this morning, my dear madam, communicated to Mr. Sydney that, in compliance with your advice, Miss Sydney had at once declined contesting his claim to the estates hitherto believed to be hers, and that you had both, immediately on hearing how the case stood, removed from Sydney Park, and left it and all its valuable contents free for him to take possession. He was much touched by this proceeding on the part of Miss Sydney and yourself, and ex-

pressed his desire that you would select any portion of the furniture or books endeared to you by long association, which he would have conveyed to your future dwelling. It is evident that he had anticipated a stubborn resistance to his claims from Miss Sydney, and a lawsuit, which might, in all probability, keep him many years out of the possession of his rights. Though certain of regaining them in the end, he had a great dread of the delay, anxiety, and expense attending a lawsuit, and the being saved from one has highly gratified him. He really evinced considerable good feeling towards yourself and Miss Sydney, yet, strange to say, with all this declared sympathy, he did not mention anything that would lead me to suppose that he intends declining your too generous proposition of devoting the savings of your own income to reimburse the money expended by your late husband in the payment of his father's debts."

"I expected nothing of the kind, and, though I hope I am not proud, I must say that I wish for no favour from Mr. Sydney."

"But *this is* being proud, dear madam, and pardon me if I take the liberty of suggesting that it would not be wise to reject any offer of friendship which Mr. Sydney might think it right to make. For Miss Sydney's sake, pray do not slight this suggestion."

"I shall always be ready to adopt your advice,

Mr. Wandsworth, as I have the perfect conviction it would ever be given with the kindest views to my advantage, and that of my daughter."

Mrs. Sydney now communicated to Mr. Wandsworth her desire to rent a cottage somewhere in his neighbourhood, and also the arrangements she wished to make about insuring her life for the benefit of her child, both of which plans he promised to carry into effect with as little delay as possible.

"An acquaintance of mine called on me this morning, madam," said Mr. Wandsworth, "to inquire your address. He said he was commissioned by Mr. Rhymer to make the inquiry, but I, not knowing whether you wished just at present to have your place of abode made known, declined giving it, but said I would forward any letter sent to me for you."

"You acted perfectly rightly," replied Mrs. Sydney, "for until all my arrangements for the future are finally made, I do not wish to receive any visits."

"Would you make an exception in favour of Mr. Sydney? He seemed anxious to be permitted to pay his respects to you and Miss Sydney."

"I shall be guided by your advice."

"Then I counsel you to see him, and will convey to him your permission to present himself. And now, dear madam, let me entreat you not to hurry your-

self about taking a house. This one is quite at your service, as long as you choose to honour me by occupying it. See all the villas to be let around here, and just now there are a vast number, and when you find one that perfectly suits your taste, I will secure it for you. I have added two additional female servants to the establishment here, in order that your comfort may be a little better attended to, and I trust that you will pardon any want of it experienced since your arrival here."

Mr. Wandsworth was highly gratified when Miss Sydney entered the room, her cheeks wearing a brighter bloom than he had seen on them since her return from Italy, and her spirits much more cheerful. He gave her the key of his bookcases, and offered to send down daily the morning papers, but this last offer was declined by Mrs. Sydney, who was so little curious as to what was passing in the political or fashionable world, that she seldom looked into one.

Next morning, Mr. Wandsworth forwarded to her two letters, addressed to his care. One was from Mr. Rhymer, who, with much delicacy and good feeling, expressed his sympathy at the unexpected change in the prospects of her daughter, and his anxious desire to evince, by every means in his power, the esteem he had always entertained for her and Miss Sydney. In his letter, Mr. Rhymer stated that he had met

their mutual friend Strathern, whose devotion to them was, if possible, increased by the intelligence he had communicated to him of Miss Sydney's change of fortune. The other letter was in the well-known writing of Strathern, and Mrs. Sydney's heart beat quicker when she recognised it. Her daughter was not present when these letters were delivered, and the anxious mother was glad to be alone, while she perused Strathern's. Nothing could be more touching than this letter, which, while it expressed with self-respect his surprise and regret at the treatment he had experienced at their hands, and his utter ignorance of any act on his part that could justify it, entreated permission once more to lay his hand and fortune at the feet of Miss Sydney, and pledged himself to satisfy them that he had not been guilty of any conduct that could deprive him of their good opinion.

"Strange, incomprehensible!" said Mrs. Sydney, as again she perused the letter. "How can he justify the subterfuge of which he was guilty when he stated that he was going to spend the evening with his invalid friend, Lord Delmington, and yet, that same evening, we beheld him walking in the Coliseum with a woman whose name, nay, whose existence, he carefully concealed from us? How explain her presence with him at Como? Alas! he cannot justify himself. Would that he could, for the generosity of renewing

his proposal for my daughter's hand, the moment that he discovered she was portionless, proves his disinterestedness and high-mindedness. And yet, notwithstanding what I know, there is an air of truth and conscious rectitude in his letter, that almost shakes my belief in his culpability."

Mrs. Sydney reflected some time whether or not she should show Strathern's letter to Louisa. "It may agitate and distress her," thought she; "but, nevertheless, I think it is better she should see it."

Various and contending were the feelings of Louisa Sydney as she perused Strathern's letter. Indignation that he could assume an air of injured innocence, when *she* had beheld him still the companion of that fair, but guilty woman, with whom she had first seen him that never-to-be-forgotten night at the Coliseum, at one moment filled her breast, but the next brought the conviction that *she* was still beloved, and beloved for herself alone, as was incontestably proved by his present offer, after he had learned that she was no longer the rich heiress; and the conviction was most gratifying. Often was that letter perused, and long did Louisa Sydney reflect on its contents, in the hope of finding some justification for him whom to have been able to pronounce guiltless would have filled her with joy; but, alas, she could not doubt the evidence of her eyes, and this assumption of innocence on his

part only proved that he was hardened in sin; and, angry that he should thus attempt to make her again his dupe, she requested her mother to write to him, and firmly decline his offer.

In vain did Mrs. Sydney propose to give Strathern an opportunity of justifying himself, by her writing to him the cause that had induced them to act as they had done. Her daughter would not consent to the adoption of this measure, urging, as her motive, that Strathern must be already perfectly aware of the cause, and only evaded referring to it because he could offer no excuse that any woman with pride or delicacy could accept.

The answer was despatched, and, though worded as gently and kindly as Mrs. Sydney, under existing circumstances, could express herself, its receipt inflicted the deepest pain on Strathern. It was now plain that no effort on his part could restore him to the place he once held in Miss Sydney's affection, or to the esteem of her mother; and as this torturing conviction impressed itself on his mind, a feeling of despair, which required all his reason to combat with, arose in his troubled breast. He became moody and irritable—reckless of the present, and hopeless for the future.

Not so was Louisa; a notion that her rejection might awaken her lover to repentance, and lead to a

conduct that she could approve, had entered her mind, and with it a thousand vague hopes of better days that cheered her spirits, and supported her under present trials.

CHAPTER XLV.

The lowly vulgar and the great
Resemble more than men believe,
And howe'er different their state,
They only can themselves deceive;
The same their selfish thoughts and views,
Though each a diff'rent road pursues.

For education can't refine,
Though 'tis a lord's, a vulgar mind;
Nor thoughts ignoble, though they shine
In polish'd phrase, more favour find
Than when, with language rough and rude,
The low-born vulgar will intrude.

"What a creature!" exclaimed Lady Wellerby, when the Marchioness of Mountserrat withdrew. "Was there ever such a vulgar creature? I really pity poor Mountserrat for having allied himself to such a dreadful person."

"Well, I must say that I think your pity is strangely misplaced, Lady Wellerby," observed Lord Fitzwarren. "Had his brother not died, Axy would

have had the best of the bargain in marrying this rich woman, and so he well knew, so I really think *he* deserves no pity."

"But you do not, I hope, mean to say that *she* does?" demanded Lady Wellerby.

"No, certainly; neither merit pity. The lady wanted a title, and was willing to barter her money for it. The gentleman required money, and gave his name for it. Both have got what they desired, and consequently have no claim to commiseration."

"But a man with his rank and vast fortune might have married any one he liked," said Lady Wellerby; "and now to find himself chained to such a low-bred, vulgar person, who will expose him wherever she appears, must be, indeed, a deplorable thing."

"I know many fine ladies quite as ill-bred, and not half so good-tempered at cards," remarked Lord Wellerby. "I never saw any woman lose her money so freely. It's quite a pleasure to play with her."

"You should say to play *against* her," said Lady Wellerby, "for she plays so abominably ill that her adversary must always win."

"I have not made so agreeable an acquaintance for a long time," observed Lord Wellerby; "and know not how I should ever be able to pass the interminable evenings here had we not got her to play cards; so I desire that you and the girls,"

addressing the ladies, "treat her with respect and attention."

The young ladies shrugged their shoulders, and looked disdainful.

Lady Olivia, taking courage on the strength of her approaching nuptials, ventured to say that, "for her part, she should carefully avoid forming any intimacy with such an odious person," a remark that drew on her a stern frown, and a half-suppressed imprecation from her father, suppressed only by the consideration that it might offend or disgust his future son-in-law. Lady Sophia bit her lip, but did not dare utter a word that would have excited the anger of her lordly papa, and the consciousness of the necessity of conciliatory measures rendered her more than ever jealous of the good fortune of her sister, which enabled her te express her feelings on this point.

"What an evening we have passed!" said Lady Sophia, as she and her sister, having dismissed their yawning *femme de chambre*, arranged their tresses and donned their *bonnets de nuit*.

"Yes, it certainly was not very amusing, I must confess," observed Lady Olivia.

"I wonder how you can allow Lord Fitzwarren to sit down to cards for a whole evening, instead of making the agreeable to you."

"The truth is, I have so many things to think of

that I like to reflect. I form projects for the future—arrange, in my mind's eye, the sort of home, furniture, carriages, &c., I shall have when I get to London, the *fêtes* I shall give, the persons I shall engage, and those I shall leave out of my parties, and, with such pleasant occupation for my thoughts, I never find time hang heavily on my hands; but you, Sophy, who are so differently situated, must be greatly bored when passing an evening like the last."

"I hope," replied Lady Sophia, growing red with anger, "that whenever I am on the point of being married I shall not be obliged to think *only* of the advantages to be gained by my marriage, and not of the person through whom they are to be secured. Poor Lord Fitzwarren, I acknowledge, is not a man on whom any rational woman could bestow a thought, so you do well to think of all the good his fortune will secure you."

"Well, I am sure, Sophy, I heartily wish that I saw any chance of your getting a husband."

"If to obtain one I should be compelled to plot, scheme, and flatter as you have done, Olivia, I never shall be married; for nothing could induce me to submit to such humiliation and trouble, even to secure a clever and sensible man, as you have taken to catch a fool."

"You forget that *you* tried every scheme to win the very person whom you now affect to scorn, and

that you would give your eyes to stand in my position."

"Me! What an absurd idea! I would not marry this stupid fool for ten times his fortune. But as *you* were so glad to catch him, you fancy I should have been equally so."

"Poor Sophia, the grapes are sour! But why should we be continually quarrelling? Is it my fault that Fitzwarren preferred me? Consider that in a short time it will be in my power to be of use to you, and do not provoke me too far."

"Provoke you, forsooth! You really talk as if you were about to be a great personage, instead of simply becoming the wife of a very dull man, looked on by all who know him as a weak, silly, good-natured fool, whom you have duped into wedding you."

"I beg you will not address any more of your rude speeches to me," said Lady Olivia, drawing herself up proudly. "If, through motives of economy, our parents compel us to share one room, it is very hard that I should be tormented by your envy and jealousy."

"Me envious or jealous! Really, Olivia, you make yourself too ridiculous. I am sure I regret as much as you can the parsimonious habits of papa and mamma, which compel us to have but one sleeping room. However, you may display your ill t mper as

much as you like, I shall not say another word to you, for I consider such quarrels as beneath me;" and Lady Sophia entered her bed, drew the curtains close, and, by certain nasal sounds, soon gave evidence that she slept.

The Lady Olivia shortly after followed the example set by her sister, and in her dreams again was busy in arranging the splendour of her town house, equipage, and toilette, while Lady Sophia, now in sleep, groaned in spirit over her disappointed hopes in not having secured a husband, and envied the good fortune of her sister, who had caught one.

When the Marchioness of Mountserrat retired to her dressing-room, after the card-party at Lady Wellerby's, her temper, controlled by her prudence in the presence of strangers, soon broke forth.

"Go, Justin, and order some supper to be sent to me; I am half-starved, for those shabby people, after winning my money, never so much as offered me a glass of wine and a biscuit."

The supper was soon served, and the lady did ample justice to it, as also to some iced champagne, which she pronounced to be very refreshing.

"It is not possible dat madame has lost *all* de money she had in her purse, ven she vent out," said Justine, elevating her eyebrows into an expression of extreme astonishment.

"Yes, and a great deal more, Justin."

"Ah! *madame la marquise* must take care, or her fortune vill soon be gone. Madame does not know vat ruin comes from de cards."

"I don't care a fig for cards, except a game at beggar-my-neighbour; but when they proposed to play, I thought it would look very shabby for me to hang back, as if I was afraid of losing my money, so I went on and lost every rubber. But I never showed that I was in the least vexed, though my losses amounted, at last, to a large sum, and, to tell the truth, I felt disposed, more than once, to throw the cards at that ugly old woman Lady Wellerby's head, when I saw how anxious she was for me to go on—her little eyes twinkling in her head, just for all the world like the snake somebody was talking of one day, when the wicked thing fixes its eyes on some unhappy bird, until it drops into the horrid mouth of the snake. I was the poor bird, Justin, and Lady Wellerby the snake."

"Or, rader, *madame la marquise* vas de goose, and Mi-ladi Vellerby de fox," replied the pert *femme de chambre*, smiling at her own attempt to be witty.

"It is very rude and impertinent of you, Justin, to compare me to a goose, and I desire you will not take such a liberty again;" and the face of the marchioness gave indication of a coming storm.

"*Pardonne, madame la marquise*, I not mean no harm. I make de mistake vera often, because I not know de English tongue; but *pauvre* Justine vould rader die dan vex *madame la marquise*."

"Well, then, I will overlook it this time, but you must pay attention, Justin, to what you say in future; for now that I am a marchioness, it would not be right for me to allow a servant of mine to show any disrespect to the harristocracy."

"Madame is right, I vill mind vot I say for de future;" and the cunning *femme de chambre* threw an expression of as much contrition into her countenance as she could assume. "Madame is so good, and so noble, dat I vera moche fear dese people she play cards vid dis night vill vin all her money before she know vat her danger is."

"No, Justin, don't be alarmed, I'll be on my guard. I'll just let them win a little more, to give them time to introduce me to all the fashionable people at Naples, and when I have made other acquaintances I'll leave off cards."

"*Mais, madame la marquise*, dat is vat I vant to say, before you have made de acquaintance you vish you will have lost so moch moneys, dat is better den all de lords and ladies in de vorld. Ven von has vere moche moneys dey need not care von fig, as de English say, for all de fine people in Europe; and

madame la marquise had moche better keep her moneys safe dan trow it away at cards."

"You speak like one of *your* class, Justin; but, recollect, *I* belong to the harristocracy, and must act as such, and live with lords and ladies, my own equals."

"And vat good vill dat do, madame? Have you not every ting in dis vorld to make you *contente*—a large fortune, good health, good appetite, you sleep well, you have fine dresses, fine jewels, fine carriages—you have a *grande* title, vich has cost you noting—are married vidout the *ennui* of a husband; vat more, den, can you desire?"

"I desire to live in grand company—to be with great lords and ladies."

"Ah! *madame la marquise*, *vous avez tort*, dat is, you are wrong. It is only lords and ladies dat vant your moneys dat vill make your acquaintance. Dey vill *mocque* and laugh ven your back is turned."

"Mock and laugh! and pray why should they? What is there to mock or laugh at in me?" and the parvenue's eyes darted angry gleams at her *femme de chambre*, and her cheeks became crimsoned with rage.

Justine saw that in her desire to warn her obtuse mistress she had gone too far, but with a tact that seldom failed her, she quickly recovered from her momentary embarrassment, and said, "You may vell,

madame la marquise, ask de question. Vat, indeed, could dey find to *mocque* or laugh at in you? But madame may not know dat lords and ladies who are *née*, dat is born, lords and ladies, alvays laugh at dose lords and ladies who are not born so. Oh! I have seen such *mechanceté* in de grand persons dat it makes me sorry to see *madame la marquise* vant to live vid dem. Dey are as cold and polished as de marble in deir fine houses, and feel as little."

Mollified by this artful speech, the marchioness forgot her anger, and admitted there might be some truth in Justine's statement; but added that nevertheless *she*, as one of the harristocracy, must live with her own equals; for if she did not, what would be the good of being a marchioness. Seeing, however, that Mademoiselle Justine was not convinced of the necessity, her mistress, in order to conciliate and win her over to her opinion, said, "Justin, you may take that garter-blue silk dress of mine, with the black lace flounces."

"*Merci, madame*," was the brief recognition of this present; and, as Justine withdrew, the marchioness murmured to herself, "Well, I think Justine might have shown a little more gratitude for such a rich gift. Why, that gown, with its lace-flounces and trimming, could not have cost me less than thirty guineas, and I have only worn it twice, yet she took it as coolly as

if it was only worth a few shillings. Oh, those French waiting-maids! what a set they are! Whoever would have thought, when I was nursery-maid at Colonel Fairfax's, that I should one day have a French maid, be a marchioness, sitting down to play at cards with earls and countesses, and be giving a gown that cost thirty guineas to my waiting-maid? When I look back, it appears for all the world like a dream; and as for the time when I was in Ireland, and was looked down on there for not being pretty enough to get a partner at a dance, I can hardly bring myself to think that I am the same woman. Well, sure enough, some people have the luck of it. How many of the gentry that I used to look up to with envy formerly, might now be envious of me, with my grand title and fine fortune? And yet, somehow or other, I am not happy, after all.

"When I was poor, I thought that if I could once get money I'd be the happiest creature in the world, yet all the wealth I have since got has never given me the same pleasure as did the first quarter's wages, small as it was, that I received from Mrs. Fairfax. When I became so rich, I fancied that if I had a title I should require nothing more to be happy. I got the title, and yet am no happier than before; for now I want to live in company with great lords and ladies; though, from the specimen I had this night, when I lost my money, and was tired to death into the bar-

gain, I begin to fear their company won't make me any happier than I was before. I'm curious to know what I'll want next.

"Heighho! I sometimes think what a lively, sprightly girl I used to be when I was as poor as a church mouse, singing and laughing half the day, while now I'm obliged to remember every now and then that I'm a great lady, with a grand title and a fine fortune, and my own mistress, too, to cheer my spirits, I feel so often out of sorts. I've got so used to fine clothes, diamonds, and good eating, which in the beginning gave me so much pleasure, that I hardly seem to care about them now. Heighho! how vexatious it would be if, as Justin says, these grand lords and ladies always laugh at those who are not born grand, and only become acquainted with them for some object of their own! How hot and feverish I feel! It cannot be the *paty de perigo* (*paté de Perigord*) and champagne I had for my supper that keeps me awake, and makes me feel so uncomfortable? Well, if one can't have a little supper without being kept tossing about in a fever in one's bed all night, what's the good of being rich enough to afford to have dainties?

"Heighho! how tired I am! I've a great mind to ring my bell, and have Mrs. Bernard up to read me to sleep. But if I ring, Justin will answer my bell, and be in a bad temper, so I won't. Yet it is

vexing to think that while I can't get a wink of sleep, my dam de company and maid, who receive my wages and eat my bread, are, I dare be sworn, at this moment sleeping soundly. What a pity it is one can't buy sleep, and a good digestion that would enable one to eat everything one likes! It is some comfort, though, not to have the marquis always present at my meals, with his cold, proud eye watching every morsel I put into my mouth, as if he grudged it to me, and whenever I made a little free with him, drawing himself up as if he were a prince and I nobody. Yes, my marrying him, getting his grand title, and getting rid of himself, was the best hit I ever made; and yet, after all, I am not happy, though I try to cheat myself continually by thinking of all I have to make me so. But what is the good of having all that is supposed to give happiness if one hasn't the thing itself? 'Ay, there's the rub,' as the man in the play said;" and the marchioness heaved a deep sigh, and again turned on her sleepless couch.

The next day the *cuisine* of the Grand Bretagne gave early note of preparation for the dinner to be given to the Wellerbys and Lord Fitzwarren.

"Let no expense be spared, Justin," said the marchioness to her *femme de chambre*, as she sipped her *café au lait* in bed, and devoured some hot buttered toast, as a substitute for the muffins, crumpets, or sally-luns for which she longed. "Tell the currier"

(as she still persisted in calling her *courrier*, in spite of Justine's frequent correction) "to inform the master of the inn that I wish the dinner and dessert to be the most costly and elegant that he can furnish, and the wines to match."

"*Mais, madame la marquise*, how many persons vill there be?"

"Six; five, beside myself."

"*Il me semble* dat a *leetle* dinner, *très recherche*, vould be more elegant for so small a party."

"Not at all, Justin. I hate little dinners; so mind you tell the currier to order a grand dinner."

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! quelle bête de femme*," murmured Mademoiselle Justine to herself, as she descended to convey her mistress's instructions to the *courrier*. "*Voyons*, vat can be made out of dis folly! If she *vill* be a fool, vy should I not profit by it? *Ecoutez, mon ami*," said she to the *courrier*, when he answered her summons; "I have von proposition to make to you vich might be of great advantage to us bote."

"*Eh bien*, mademoiselle;" and the *courrier* listened with profound attention.

"Madame vishes to give a grand dinner, and no expense to be spared. Dem vere her words. Now, such an order make de golden harvest for de *auber-*

giste, et, par consequence, for de *courrier*, who vill have his per centage and his *douceur* for de dinner."

"*Eh bien, mademoiselle;* is not dat all fair? Every one must have his rights, and dis is mine."

"*Je ne dis pas le contraire, mon ami;* but vat I tink is, dat if you and I vere better friends, dat is, more sociable, ve could help one anoder, and make moche more moneys."

"*Je ne comprends pas trop, Mademoiselle Justine.*"

"Vat I mean is, dat if you vould *partage* de profits of de dinners vid me, I vould make *madame la marquise* give many more. If you vill not, I vill prevent her to give any."

The courrier put on a look of grave consideration, and said, "Now, mademoiselle, if I was to ask you to share de profits you have from de *modistes* and *couturières*, vould you not tink me very unreasonable, and vould you consent?"

"*Mais, mon ami, ça n'aura pas le sens commun.*"

"*Pourtant, mademoiselle, c'est à peu pres le méme chose.*"

"*Pas du tout. I can* prevent *madame la marquise* to give de dinners, but *you cannot* prevent her from having *des robes, des bonnets, des chapeaux, et mille autres choses* dat I only can order."

"Dere is someting in dat," observed the courrier, and he scratched his head.

"I have de grand influence over madame. I can make her do anyting I like. If I say to her dat you am not von good man, or dat I hear you speak disrespectfully of her, she vill give you your *congé*, and all you can say or swear, she vill not believe von vord."

"*Mais, mademoiselle, ça serait trop mechant, trop vilain.*"

"It vill be your own fault. I not like to do harm. *Je suis une bonne pâte de femme, mais que voulez vous?* Every von must tink of his own interest, and make de moneys vhile de sun shine. I prefer to be your friend rader dan your enemy, but it all depends on yourself vich I am to be."

The courrier reflected for some minutes, and then said, "How much of de profits vould satisfy mademoiselle? She vill not, I hope, be too unreasonable?"

"I tink one half cannot be considered so."

"Von half is too moche; suppose ve say von quarter. Dat is good deal of moneys, for I vill have all de trouble, and must make all de arrangement vid de *maître d'auberge*."

"Vell, I vill not be too hard vid you. I vill be content vid de quarter; but mind, *monsieur le courrier*, do not fancy you have de milords or miladies *Anglaises* to deal vid, who are so stupid and so *bête* dat any von may impose on dem. No, no; I am vide avake, and must have my rights, so be exact."

" Can mademoiselle doubt me ?"

" I have lived long enough as *femme de chambre* to doubt everyting and everybody, so take care dat I have no reason to complain of you. *C'est l'union qui fait la force.* If ve understand each oder all vill go vell, and if madame should ever find de fault about de bills, I vill tell her dat dey are vere cheap ; but mind, *mon ami*, ve must alvays appear *not* to like each oder, and dat vill prevent her, or de oders, to have de suspicion."

" *Ah ! mademoiselle, quelle bonne tête vous avez. Vraiment vous êtes une femme etonnante.*"

" *Je ne suis pas trop bête, monsieur le courrier, c'est vrai, mais ecoutez moi.* I propose for you to arrange vid de *maître d'auberge*, to charge de double price for de dinner, *dessert, et des vins*, den to give you von half of de profit, of vich you are to give me de quarter."

" Dat vould not do in many hotels, mademoiselle—not here, *par example—les aubergistes sont trop exacts.*"

" Dey are, den, *plus bête* dan I tought dey vere. Vell, vat you must do is to make de false bills, vich you can show madame, pay de true vons, and ve can den settle our accounts togeder ; but mind, *monsieur le courrier*, no sheating vid me ; no, no, I not stand it."

" *Comptez sur mon honneur, Mademoiselle Justine ; fiez vous à moi.*"

"I have von oder tought: suppose ve could have de *aubergiste* to furnish all de articles of a second or third-rate *qualité*, and charge for de best. Vould not dat be an excellent plan?"

"*Oui, mademoiselle*, if ve vere in a private house, and I had de buying of de tings; but in an hotel like dis, de *maître* vould not enter into des arrangements *pareil*. Dey have deir habitudes, vich dey never change. Dey allow de *courriers* to live in deir hotels free of expense, give dem de best of everyting, *même* pay deir *blanchisseuses*, and sometimes give de *douceurs*, but dat is all."

"*Ma foi!* to hear you talk von might believe de *aubergistes* de most honourable men in de vorld; but I have my doubts, *monsieur le courrier*, and so I repeat, once more, do not attempt to impose on me."

Few persons ever enjoyed a good dinner more than Lord Wellerby, and his enjoyment was greatly increased by the circumstance of his not having to pay for it. His satisfaction may therefore be imagined when he took his seat at the well-covered board of the Marchioness of Mountserrat, which might literally be said to "groan with the weight of the feast." He looked around with eyes beaming with pleasure, and smacked his lips in anticipation of the treat that awaited him.

"I wish, my lords and ladies," said the hostess

"on hospitable thoughts intent," "that I could have procured you a better dinner; but Naples, unfortunately, is *not* London, so neither turtle nor venison is to be had. You must, therefore, take the will for the deed, and make the best of the poor dinner set before you. I think I can recommend the sherry, and the champagne is not amiss. My banker here procured both for me, as I am very shy about drinking the wines generally to be found at inns. What a way they have of messing up the fish in this country, and in France, too! One never can tell what one is going to eat. Lord Fitzwarren, won't you ask Lady Wellerby to drink a glass of wine? You don't take half care enough of the ladies."

"I never drink plain wine," observed the lady.

"There you are very wrong, for in a hot climate like this one requires it;" and to illustrate her belief in the necessity of having recourse to stimulants, the marchioness made a signal to her servant, who acted in the double capacity of major domo and *courrier*, who immediately filled her glass (and it was one of no ordinary dimensions) with sherry, which, instead of sipping, as ladies generally do, she drank off with evident *gusto*. The voracity with which she devoured the various dainties set before her astonished all present save Lord Wellerby, who, too much occupied in a similar way, was rather pleased than otherwise

to be kept in countenance by the hostess. The ladies looked at her with ill-disguised horror as she washed down her food with repeated bumpers of wine, the effect of which began to be visible in her increasing exhilaration of spirits and decrease of reserve.

"Now this is what I call sociable and pleasant," said the marchioness, glancing around, her eyes becoming every moment more twinkling and her face more red. "Here we are, 'lords and ladies of high degree,' as the old song says, and yet just as happy, and enjoying the good things set before us, as if we were not at all grand folk. Some people fancy that great lords and ladies are too genteel to relish their dinners, but if they saw us just now they wouldn't think so any longer. Give Mrs. Bernard a glass of wine. I'm sure I don't grudge it to her; though—would you believe it, my lord?—they make me pay ten shillings a bottle for sherry here."

Mrs. Bernard allowed the servant to pour only a very small quantity of wine into her glass, and then diluted it with water, which operation having attracted the notice of the marchioness, she exclaimed, "why, what on earth are you about, to mix water with sherry that cost me ten shillings a bottle? If you won't drink plain wine, surely the *ordinaire*, as they call it, the wine of the country, would be quite good enough for you."

The poor *dame de compagnie's* usually pale face became crimson at this coarse remark, but the good-natured Lord Fitzwarren was the only person present who felt any pity for her.

"Does your ladyship know many persons of high rank here?" demanded the marchioness.

"Yes, several," replied Lady Wellerby, unsuspicious of the motive for asking the question.

"I'm glad to hear it; for I expect that, now we have got sociable together, your ladyship will introduce me to all your titled acquaintance, for I wish to become intimate with persons of my own station."

"There are no acquaintances of mine here with whom I am sufficiently intimate to present you without their permission."

"Is there any English marchioness here at present, I should like to know?" asked the hostess, drawing herself up, and looking anything but pleased.

"Not that I know of," was the answer.

"Then in that case *I* must be the person of the highest rank at Naples, and, therefore, you need have no difficulty in making an acquaintance with those beneath me in rank."

The coolness of this pretension surprised and offended Lady Wellerby, who said "that it was not the custom to introduce strangers to each other, without

first knowing whether or not it would be agreeable to both parties."

Lord Wellerby, who noticed the rising anger of his hostess, and, from his desire of securing her for his nightly rubber, wished to avert it, here interposed by saying that as soon as a certain event had taken place—and he looked from Lord Fitzwarren to his daughter—he would give a party, for the express purpose of making Lady Mountserrat acquainted with the *beau monde* at Naples.

"Well, that's very kind of you, I'm sure, my lord, and I'm greatly obliged to you; but it's only fair, too, for I played whist all last evening to please you, not caring a fig for the game; but I like to give and take, and if my lady won't introduce me into company, I won't play at whist, I can tell you."

This open and coarse avowal greatly disgusted the ladies, but it convinced Lord Wellerby that, had he not interposed, he would have been the sufferer, and he cast an angry and reproachful glance at his wife for having exposed him to this dilemma.

That evening the whist party was resumed, and Lord and Lady Wellerby arose from the table the winners of a considerable sum. The marchioness bore her loss at play with much less philosophy than on the previous night, and more than once bit her lips, cried out on the badness of her cards, and angrily

slapped the table, demonstrations of dissatisfaction which alarmed Lord and Lady Wellerby, lest they should lose an adversary whom it was so easy to defeat. Lord Fitzwarren more than once counselled his partner to leave off playing, assuring her, with equal truth and candour, that her ill-luck was only to be exceeded by her ignorance of the game; but although much discomposed by losing, she persisted in playing, for the sole purpose, as she that night, when undressing, confided to Mademoiselle Justine, of showing those lords and ladies that she could afford to lose, and wouldn't be cowed by ill-luck.

"And yet I confess," said she to her *femme de chambre*, "that I felt such a hatred to Lord and Lady Wellerby when I saw them win rubber after rubber, and count the money over with such eager eyes and clutching fingers, that I longed to throw the cards at their heads, and call them a couple of cheats. Ah! Justin, people may say what they will, but being a marchioness doesn't change one's feelings a bit, I can tell you."

END OF VOL. III.

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